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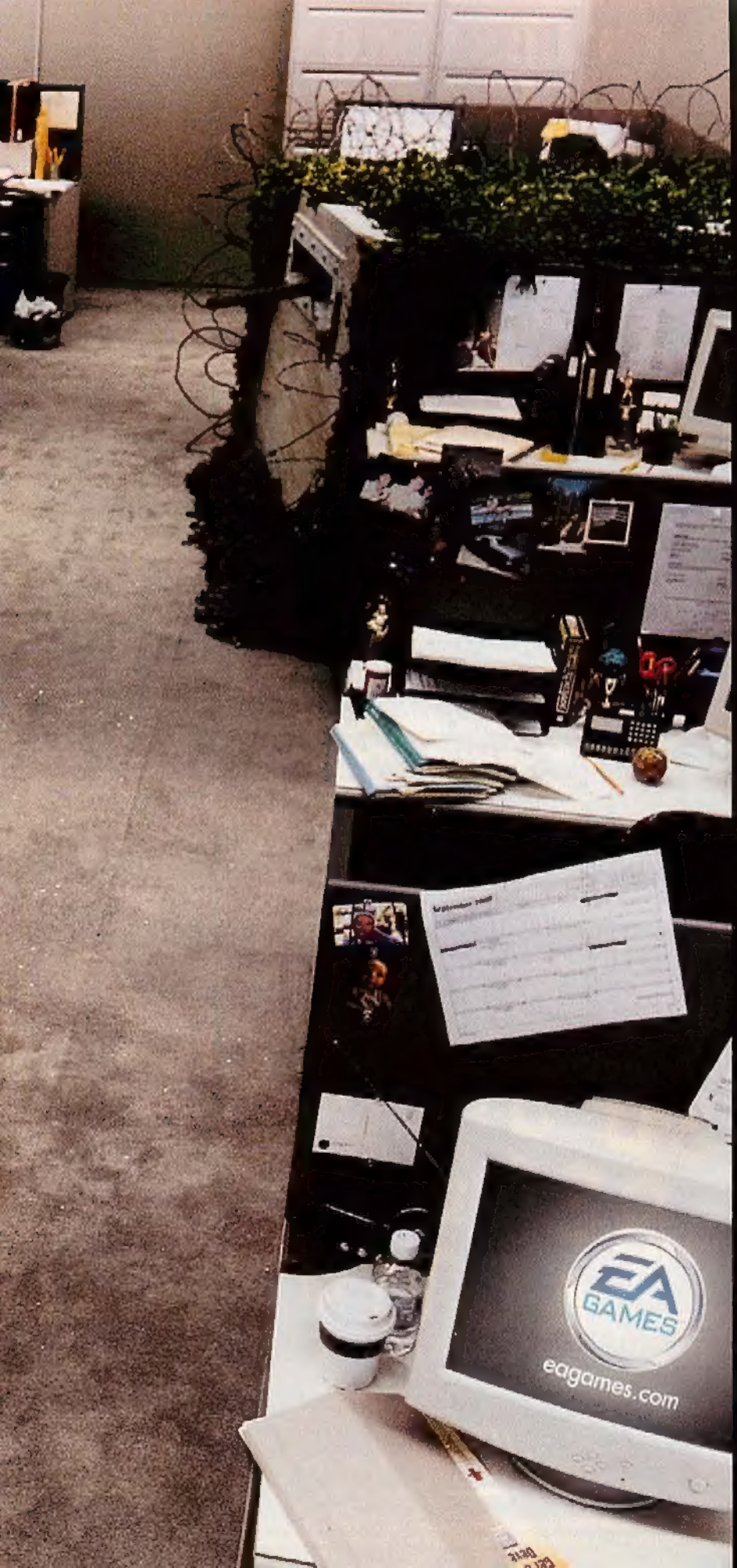

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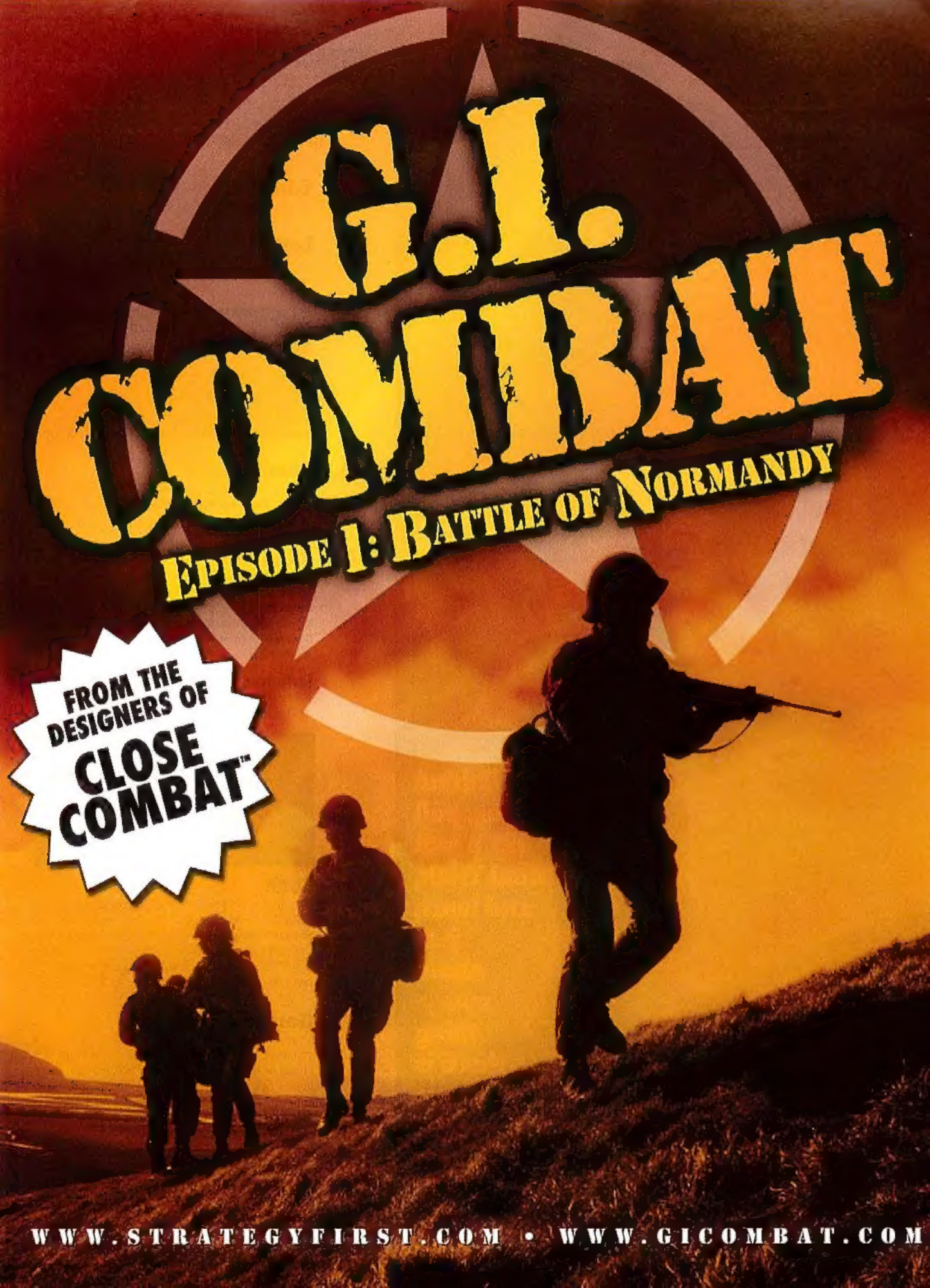
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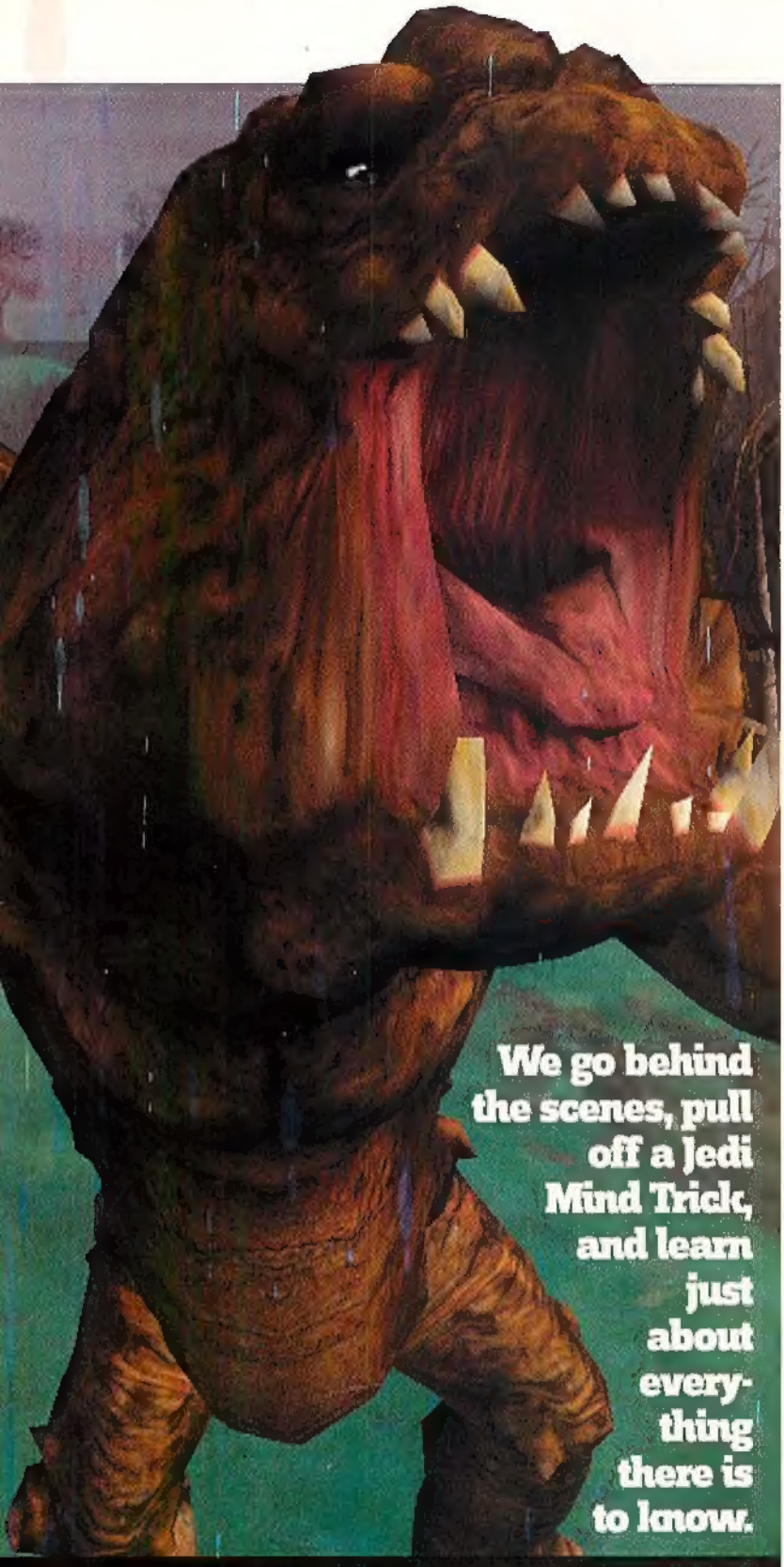

We go behind the scenes, pull off a Jedi Mind Trick, and learn just about everything there is to know.

64 COVER STORY
Star Wars Galaxies
CGW delivers the exclusive story on nearly everything that is anything in *Star Wars Galaxies*. The definitive Jedi's guide to the galaxy is here.

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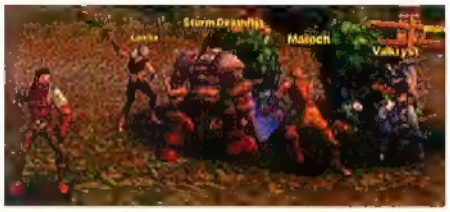
Wil has something to say. Run in fear.

16 **Letters**
Thanks for your letters, people. What else would we line Chim-Chim's cage with?



28 **Loading...**
Get a big steaming load of screens from these games: **Pro Race Driver, Shadowbane,** and **World of WarCraft.**

36 **Read Me**
Unreal Tournament was *CGW*'s 1999 Game of the Year for good reason—it was one of the best shooters ever. Now the sequel is almost here, and it looks sweet. Also, check out updates on **C&C: Generals, Age of Wonders II,** and, uh-oh, another **Tomb Raider** game.

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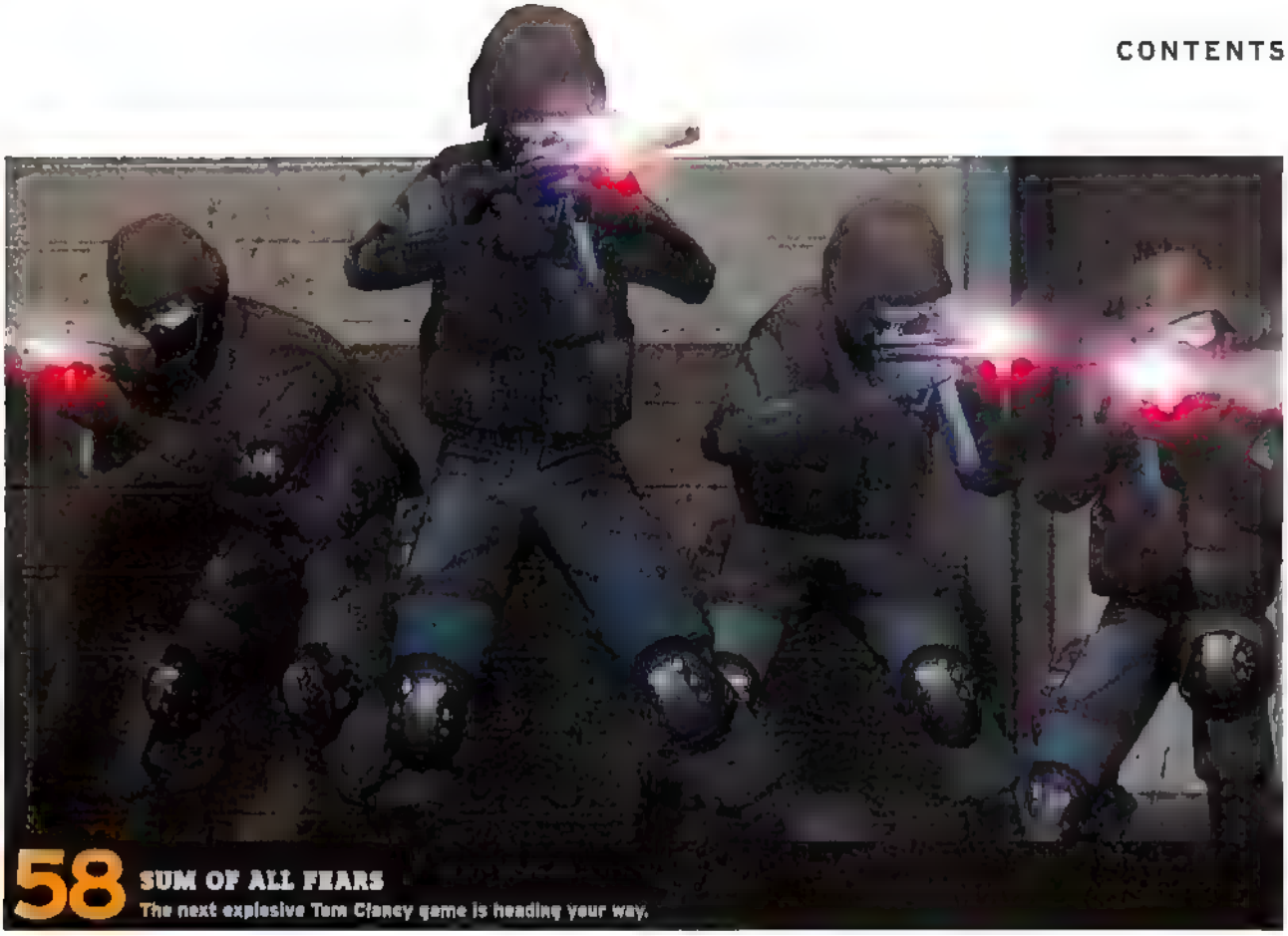
Jeff is done whining about the death of PC gaming. Now if he would just shut up about *Golden Girls* going off the air.



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Will plays with more toys and gets paid for it.

36 READ ME
It's *Unreal Tournament 2003*, homeslice. Rawk! \m/

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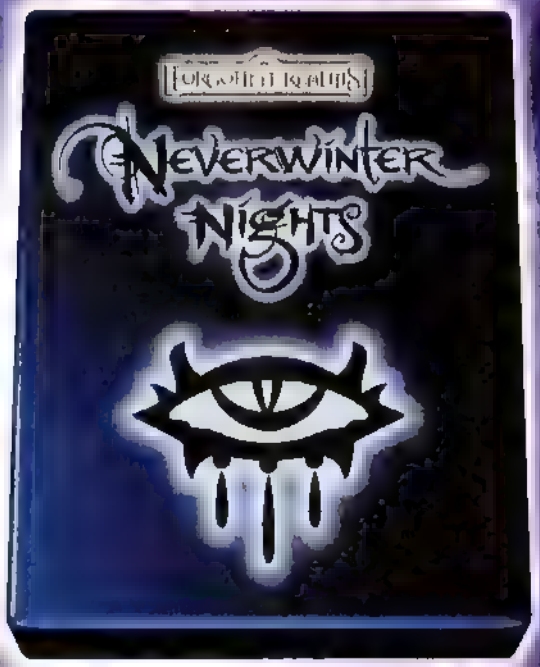

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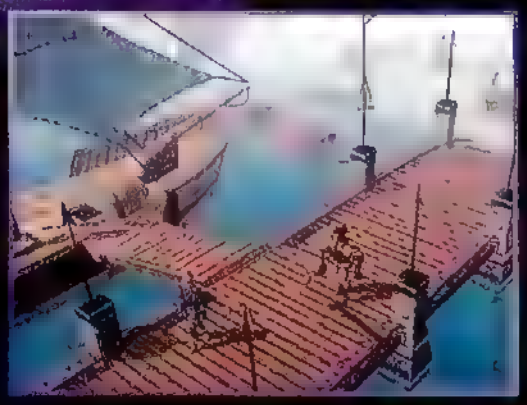

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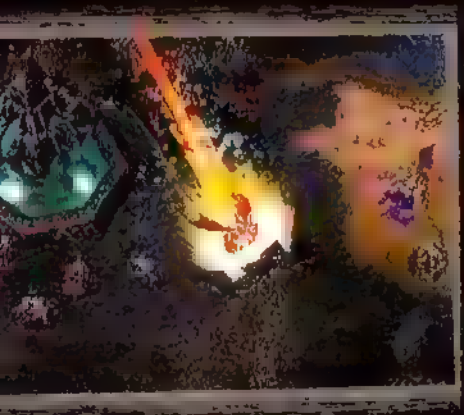

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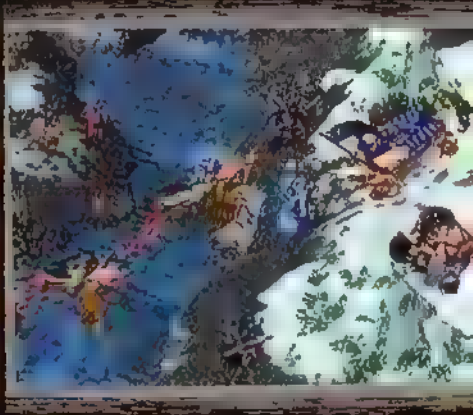

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Founder **Russell Sipe**

The Apple Doesn't Fall Far From the Tree

I'm pretty strict about the games that I let my 7-year-old son Julian play. For instance, I typically don't let him play shooting games like *Halo* or fighting games like *Dead or Alive 3*. However, during this year's spring break, I brought him into the office to spend a day with me.

After a few hours of having him play games and surf the Internet, my "at home" rules broke down and I let him play *Dead or Alive 3* on the Xbox. He knew that he was doing something a little outside of the norm of what I let him do. He was smiling from cheek to cheek as he beat the crap out of his opponents.

He was smiling from cheek to cheek as he beat the crap out of his opponents.

"Okay, I guess it's all harmless fun," I thought to myself. Then, lo and behold, as he was battling with one of the game's scantily clad female opponents, he blurted out to the character, "Shouldn't you be at home cooking?!" As a reasonably well-rounded man of the new millennium, I was horrified. He's a good kid, but games do have the ability to bring out your more base characteristics.

In one sense they're a great catharsis. I'd rather he say that to a game character within earshot of me so I can tell him how inappropriate it is, instead of saying it to one of the girls in his second-grade class during a rousing game of kickball.

Spending a day in our offices will show you how powerfully we all react to the games that we're playing. Between Tom Price and James Mielke's expletive-laden rants, you'd think that winning at games is a life-or-death struggle.

Anyway, I'm happy to report that my son and I have gone back to playing nice games like racing and snowboarding titles, and as soon as I'm done laughing, I'll be sure to tell him that a woman's place isn't at home cooking, but wherever she wants it to be.

William O'Neal
Tech Editor

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Letters

Send comments, spare change, and marriage proposals to cgwletters@ziffdavis.com

LETTER OF THE MONTH

Technology Tool

Here is a question. In the Killer Rigs for April 2002, you claim you built identical power rigs, but in the picture they don't look identical to me. First off, one is black and the other is white. One is in the Antec SX-635 case but the other is not. One appears to have the Sound Blaster Platinum card while the other does not. You claim to use a wireless mouse, yet both have wires. One monitor is an NEC, the other doesn't appear to be. So I guess my question is, how long does it take Wil O'Neal to get his hair like that?

Jeff Clineff

Operation Flashpoint: Game of the Year?

I can't believe *Operation Flashpoint* was your Game of the Year (April 2002) when it only has one freakin' save permission. And then you guys railed on *Hitman* for having no save feature when the levels of that game were nowhere as huge as those in *Operation Flashpoint*. Not to mention that everyone in *Op Flash* is a damn sniper that can hit you from 100 yards with no sweat. And that if you die you have to start allllll over again. *Ghost Recon* and *Hitman* blow *Operation Flashpoint* outta the water. Your reviews suck.

Ryan Judas

First of all I NEVER complain to magazines about anything. Your opinion is YOUR opinion, but seriously, *Operation Flashpoint* as GAME OF THE YEAR!!!??

Freakin' *Quake* was a more realistic war game than *Op Flash*. The people in the game looked totally weird, the shadows sucked, the sound sucked, the gameplay sucked, the graphics sucked, the AI sucked (I could go on all day).

I'm not questioning your gaming authority, but really, that game was a hunk of pig crap.

Person

CGW Backpedaling

Regarding your comments about *Black & White* in your Game of the Year Awards article, I'll agree with the "bad meat" theory. The closest I'll come to agreeing with the rest of your comments is that, yes, after you get used to the incredible AI, the polished presentation, the attention to detail and the out-and-out charm that oozes from every byte of this game, you begin to realize that, at the heart of it, it is just another strategy game. So what? So are *Empire Earth* and *Civ III* and *Tropico* and every other strategy game that was released in the past year! Boring? Anything but!

Your columnists finish all games that they review, right? Do you mean to tell me that Charles Ardai played through all of *Black & White* without noticing that it was boring? Um, here's a little tip, guys. If you can spend 40-plus hours with a game and not realize that it's boring, it's not.

Don't misunderstand me. This is not one of those whiny "Why didn't my favorite game win?" letters. I thoroughly enjoy *B&W* and will continue to do so, regardless of *CGW*'s about-face. But I just had to express my bewilderment at your atypical backpedaling.

Andy Halma

The funny thing about *Black & White* is that most of us here really did love it for a while. But we can't think of another game in memory that got so old so fast for us, and eventually disappeared from our hard drives. Thus, the backpedaling. But we're glad you're still enjoying it—and we still think there's potential for a great expansion here somewhere. (*Creature Isle* wasn't it.)

Actual Not-Hate Mail!

Thank you for such a great magazine, I can always rely on you guys for the straight, honest skinny on this month's *Half-Lifes* and *Age of Empire IIs* and the usual pile of *Daikatanas* and *Professional Bull Riders*. One thing I always appreciate is your rather harsh curve for reviewing and rating the monthly releases. I have disagreed with you before, of course, I think you took it a little too hard on some games like *Deus Ex* and *Red Alert 2*, which both deserved better IMO, but

"I'm not questioning your gaming authority, but really, that game was a hunk of pig crap."

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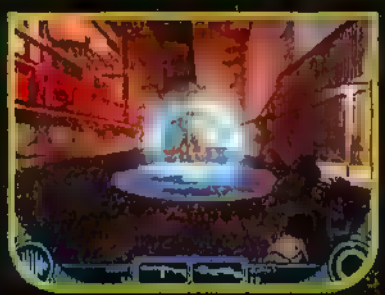

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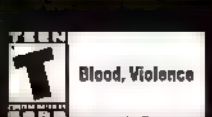

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MAIL BITES

I find it odd the two coaster candidates (*Majestic* and *WWII OL*) and your Biggest Flubbed Review (*B&W*, which you owned up to) were some of your more highly pimped-up games of the year.
Casshan2

Wil O'Neal wouldn't know a good computer system if it was stuck up his a, unless someone paid him enough to say "O yea this system is the bomb."**
BigDave

It has become increasingly harder to read an article in your magazine without someone pointing out that PCs are almost dead. GIVE IT UP ALREADY!
Kobalt Kore

"All the people on our planet are very disappointed with this magazine and its racist editors."

better too harsh than too nice.

Jeff Green still writes a great editorial every month and I hope he never stops—I never get tired of his monthly rant. Thanks for being true to me for four years running, keep up the good work, and lay off the Canada jokes: If it wasn't for us, you wouldn't have the next best thing to *Soldier of Fortune* for a mindless bloodbath—hockey.

Robert Rice

I just wanted to let you know what it is that keeps me coming back to *CGW*. Scott McCloud's work has been great, as always. I hope that he's putting together a book of his thoughts and observations on games.

The articles that you've been running on games that have been out and reviewed already (such as the Post-Mortem on *Civilization III* in the April 2002 issue) are useful. It's good to hear some perspectives on a game's life after release and patching. Reexamining the gameplay and replayability after the game loses its novelty is useful especially in this time of patches and mods. Several games could benefit from this treatment—*Black & White*, *Half-Life*, and *EverQuest* spring to mind.

The awareness of gameplay mechanics in reviews has also been helpful—it would be nice to see more of that. Fun is such a subjective experience; an understanding of the structure of the gameplay is what I'm looking for when I'm considering a game.

Thanks for the good work. Keep it up.

Bob

Coaster of the Year Photo: An Apology

I've been a devoted fan of computer games since I was furiously pressing keys on the keyboard in front of an Apple IIe. And I've been a fan of *Computer Gaming World* since I discovered it. As such, I usually enjoy each issue and look forward to the next. However, I find the photo of a man with a pistol to his head on page 84 of the April 2002 issue to be a major error in editorial judgment. Animated violence is one thing; graphic, realistic pictures like this one of a man apparently committing suicide are over the line. I'll grant you that each person draws that line of tolerance somewhere different, but given the young audience for this magazine, it seems to me a bit reckless to be including such material. Surely *CGW*'s staff could have made the point with another image.

I hope you'll keep such realistic violence out of future issues. If not, I'll be (regretfully) cancelling my 14-year-old son's subscription.

Thanks for your time.

Tony Marker, Ph.D.
Framingham, Massachusetts

Actually—we agree with you. For the record, the photo is a still from a movie by acclaimed Japanese director "Beat" Takeshi Kitano—and it's a fantasy sequence, not a real suicide. The fact that we knew this probably clouded our judgment. But the picture is not funny if you don't know it's not real—and even so, it's a bit brutal, even for us. Our apologies.

Cowboy Bebop

I was reading issue 211 of your wonderful magazine and noticed that on page 37 there was a short article on a cartoon called *Cowboy Bebop*. When I first saw this, I dismissed it as merely the result of Jeff Green or another member of your top-notch staff mixing alcohol and crack again. Then I read about it again in issue 212 in Thierry Nguyen's editorial entitled "First-Person Scooter" (page 13). Good old Scoot had never steered me wrong before, so I was especially interested in his embracing of such a dumb-sounding cartoon. I went to my local video store and rented the first two sessions on VHS. I liked them so much I went straight to Amazon.com and bought the complete DVD box set for $160. Now as I sit in my dark basement watching the series for at least the fifth time (it's more than 10 hours long, you know), I am happy that Scooter was right once again. As long as he and Jeff Green still work at *CGW*, I will keep subscribing. Way to go, Scooter!!

Vivi Ornitier

P.S. If they don't bring the *Cowboy Bebop* movie to America, it's your fault.

Ten Time

Back in the April 2002 edition, a guy named John wrote in saying the British are our closest allies, and that the "snide sidesw pe" at Britain was unnecessary. He was talking about when Dana Jongewaard (managing editor!) reviewed *The Weakest Link* (February 2002) and said unkind things about the British economy. Her comparing a crappy PC game to the state of the British economy is uncalled for. But then for *CGW* to bring up a war of over 220 years ago, saying "The British were an especially great ally back in 1776" is not only pathetic, but in very poor taste. Have you any idea how many descendants of Britain died fighting their own kind in the War of Independence? The British will always stand by America when it comes to fighting tyranny, it's just a shame that the view of Britain in your magazine (which is getting poorer each month) is so negative.

Pete (British)
Wichita, Kansas

Must we go through this again? We love you, Pete. We love everyone. Especially the British. Sure, you oppressed us, and sure, you serve beans on toast for breakfast, but almost everything else British is good. Like Motorhead. And Benny Hill.

Outraged Aliens Corner

I realize that the *Computer Gaming World* staff is completely racist against people or things of other planets, but please, have some respect. You have a lot of subscribers from my home planet, so please just change your name to *Computer Gaming Worlds*. Yes, MORE than one world. All the people on our planet are very disappointed with this magazine and its racist editors: first Canada, then Britain. NOW you're bashing my planet. I'm tired of this nonsense. Change the name.

BoomBavy Gug

Earth to BoomBavy: Get lost. We have enough trouble to deal with around here (see above letter) without worrying about overly sensitive green-skinned freaks like you. And, don't worry, we went

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ahead and cancelled your subscription in advance.

Medal of Honor

First of all, I'd like to thank you for the great review of *Medal of Honor* [March 2002], possibly the best game I've ever played. This game also gave me one of the coolest moments I have ever had while playing any game. I was sneaking around the Germans' U-boat base looking for their new prototype for stopping the Allies' radar. When I found it, it was in with a group of scientists. Ha, I thought. This will be easy—just kill them with my silenced pistol and take out the prototype. But as soon as I took the gun out, they whipped out their pistols and killed me in an instant. It was great, and I'm sure there are many other moments in this game that people will be writing about for months.

Tom Drize

We agree 100 percent about *Medal of Honor*. And how great is it that we already have another awesome shooter this year in *Jedi Knight II: Jedi Outcast*? (See our review on page 78 of this issue.) 2002 is already shaping up as a fantastic year in gaming.

A Plea for Single-Player RPGs

Perhaps I'm the only one, but I really miss the days of GOOD stand-alone, non-online RPGs. I went to the store the other day and saw another online *Ultima* expansion.

What gives!?!? I know Lord British is no longer involved, but frankly I think that the RPG market is quite lacking in quality games that are not online (except *Wizardry 8*). I even went so far as to buy abandonware on eBay! Please, give us RPGers something we can play in the privacy of our dark basements (and BTW, I thought *Ultima IX* was not that bad). Lord British, return to us!

Sandro Bayer

P.S. At least Sid Meier is still devoted to giving gamers what they want and not just milking online cash cows!

EverSmut

Look, I don't play *EverQuest* anymore, and I don't know what kind of add-ons they've implemented lately, but what exactly is the tiger doing to the wolf on page 122 of your April issue? I'd take the blonde personally. Okay, at least a good six times out of 10.

John M.

Okay, we hate you now, John. There are some things that you just can't un-see.

Proof for Joel

Hey editors, I need to know which gaming system is the best. I know you guys have probably answered this question a lot, but I need you to put this in your letters section so my console gaming friends will shut up about how my computer's graphics are worse. I know it's not true, but they need proof. Please excuse my spelling because I got a D in English.

Joel Whitney
Baker, Montana

Okay, here's your proof, Joel: PC gaming rules! Now put down the gaming magazine and go study (we'll correct your spelling this time). We are not running detention hall here.

Earl Weaver: Everyone's Favorite Hoopster!

In issue 213 on page 71 you claim that *Earl Weaver Basketball* (not *Baseball*) won Game of the Year in 1986. Was this a mistake or was the Earl Weaver franchise more successful than I thought?

Just wonderin'.

Kevin, Florida

Nope, it was a mistake. Our copy editor was too busy playing *Tiger Woods Football* that day to notice the error.

Science Corner!

In a letter from Geoff Hollinger in the March 2002 issue, he pointed out that Newtonian physics breaks down at speeds close to the speed of light, and then gave an example. However, his value of c = 3*10^6 m/s is incorrect. The actual value is c = 3*10^8 m/s. (As a physics major, I have used this number way too much—I certainly know it off the top of my head.) His calculation of 13 percent at half c is still correct, but at v = 1.5*10^6 m/s, the *difference* in momentum is pretty much irrelevant. I also wonder if the ships in this game are actually going half c...ah, well, you get my point.

So anyway, good magazine—quite funny. I like the snide little comments. The games I know anything about seemed well reviewed, too. And by the way, you can't have my lunch money! You wouldn't want to beat up a girl, would you?

Heather

"Wouldn't want to beat up a girl?" You haven't read us much, have you?

Penny Arcade BY MIKE KRAHULIK AND JERRY HOLKINS

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A million bad guys in the world and I gotta

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kill one with feet smaller than my sister's.

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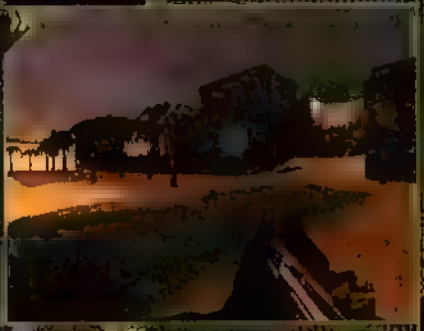

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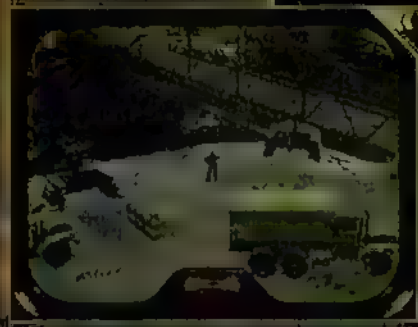

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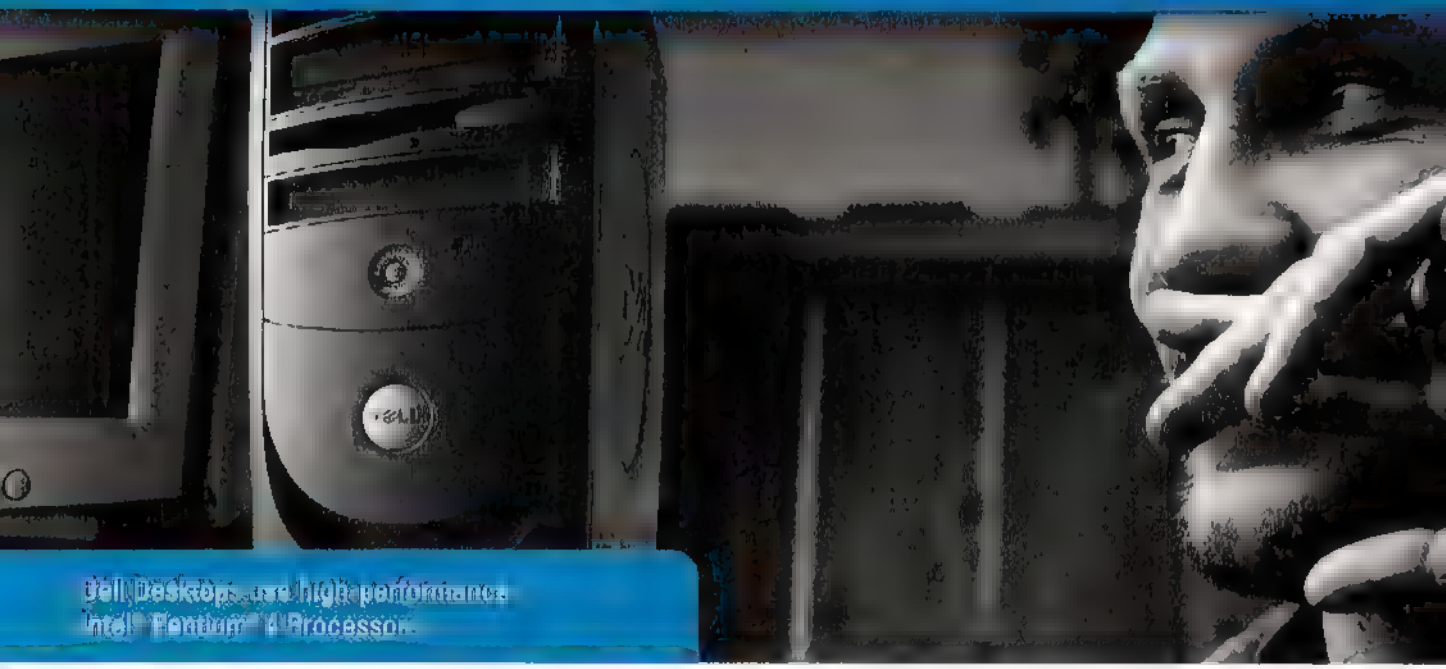

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The hottest shots of the best new games Edited by Jeff Green

WORLD OF WARCRAFT

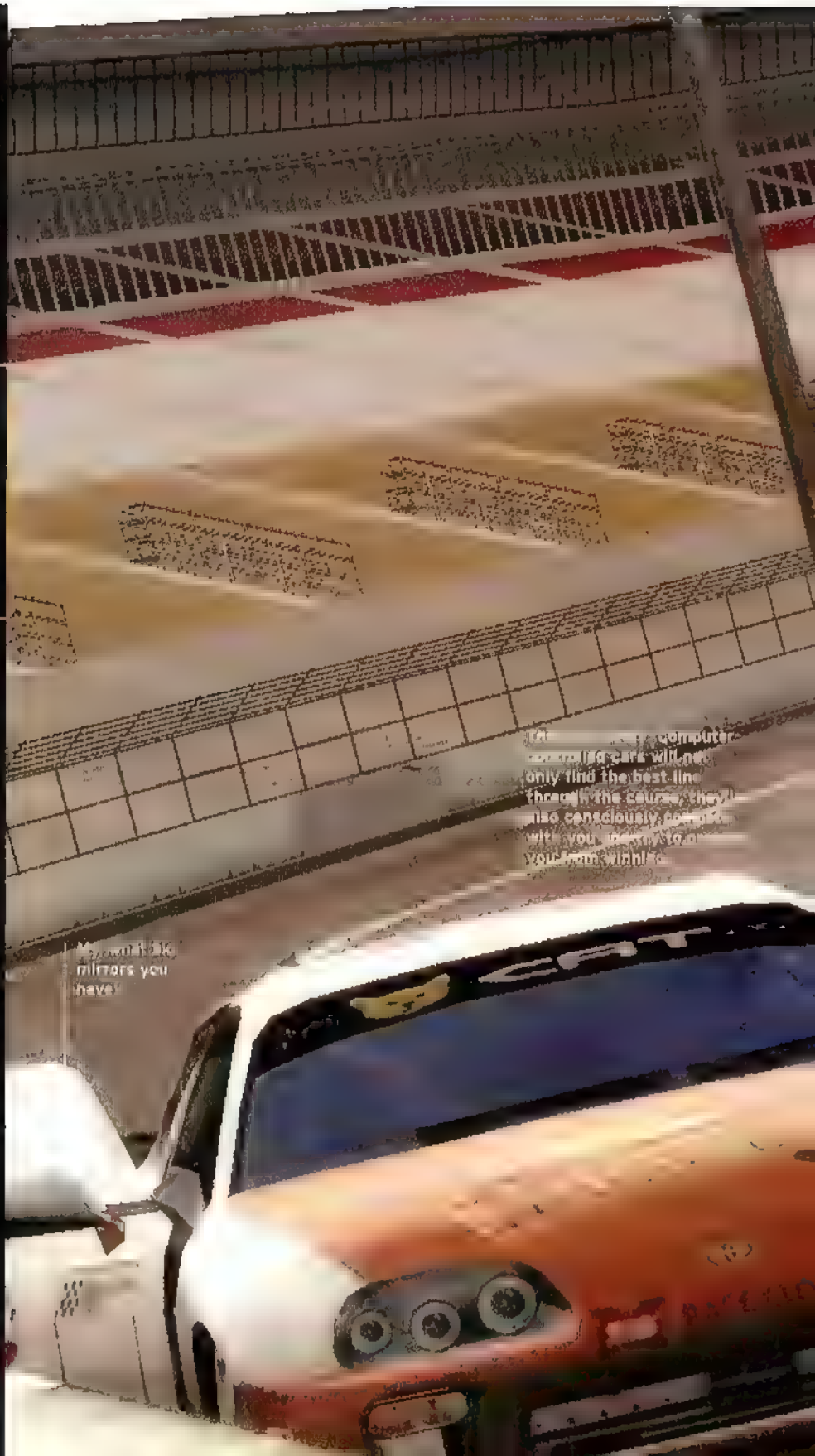
Even while the countdown to *WarCraft III* continues, Blizzard is plugging away at the *next* game in the franchise, the massively multiplayer RPG *World of WarCraft*. *WarCraft* has always had a cool backstory set in a very detailed fantasy universe (if you bothered to pay attention to the cut-scenes or read the manuals), so there's plenty of potential here for a compelling RPG. Blizzard's initial foray into first- and third-person perspective looks like it's coming along nicely—we feel like we've zoomed down from those overhead *WarCraft* maps right into the land of Azeroth. We can't wait to haul lumber around and say "Zug zug" to each other. Now that's gaming!

Orcs and Humans working together in perfect harmony! Doesn't it make you feel all warm and fuzzy?

Hi! I'm a treant. You might recognize me from such games as *WarCraft III*.
Blizzard is eschewing the photo-realism that other MMORPGs often attempt, going instead for the cartoony, skewed perspective of the *WarCraft* strategy games.
BloodClaw
Johnathan Pride
You will be able to play as an Orc, but the better news is that you'll be able to customize your hairdo.

PRO RACE DRIVER

So you want to live the life of a professional race car driver, but Pfizer still won't give $20 million to sponser your race team, even though you eat a bowl of Viagra every morning for breakfast? No matter. Racing is dangerous business anyway; you're better off sitting at home in front of your PC playing *Pro Race Driver*, a highly realistic racer from the makers of 1999's *Touring Car Challenge*. You play as Ryan McKane, an aspiring test driver rising through the ranks of the racing world in a fully articulated narrative shown throughout the game in cut-scenes. *Pro Race Driver* will be out for PC, Xbox, and PS2 in June of 2002.



More than 40 cars and 30 real-world tracks, like Hockenheim, are included.
The graphics are fantastic, with realistic reflections, shadows, and models.
EX
TOYOTA
POWER CHIP
The damage modeling is incredibly accurate thanks to something called "finite element modeling." We call it neat.

SHADOW-BANE

An unwritten motto within the *Shadowbane* development team is "Don't get mad, get even." That translates into a very player-versus-player-focused game, in which it's better to kill other people than to kill monsters. If you get put down by some dork named Fizzlebizzle, you go get some buddies of yours and kill him—twice even, for good measure. Plus, *Shadowbane* players can build entire cities, and in keeping with the theme of PvP destruction, other players can then knock these cities down. Look for this bloodlust-filled MMORPG sometime this fall.

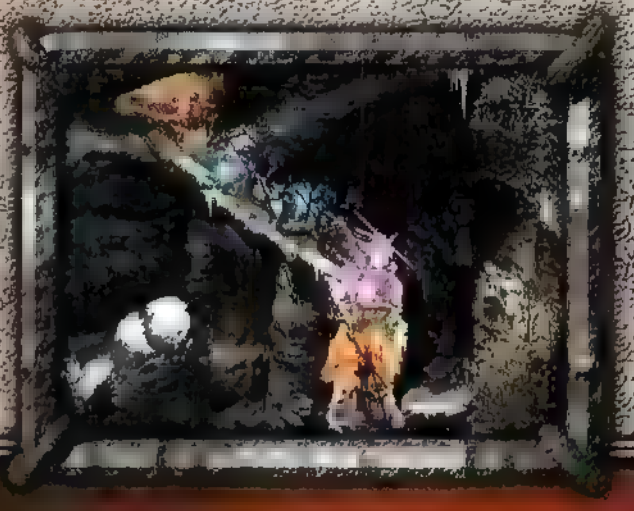
This beautiful, burning city was most likely hand-crafted. Players can build structures, staff them, and then let them run automatically. Whoever owned this town is probably pissed off.

This fella on the left is a mere Human confessor, while the other guy is an Aelfborn (half-breed between Elf and Human) barbarian. They may look similar, but thanks to the choices for professions and disciplines, they can be completely different, despite both being fighters.

Don't just get a gang together to attack a town, draft siege engineers and have trebuchets built for city-pummeling action.

If you wanna fly, you have to be a veteran player to even think about selecting this race during character creation. The birdman is an Aracoix, one of the two player races that need to be unlocked.

icewind2.blackisle.com



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Read Me

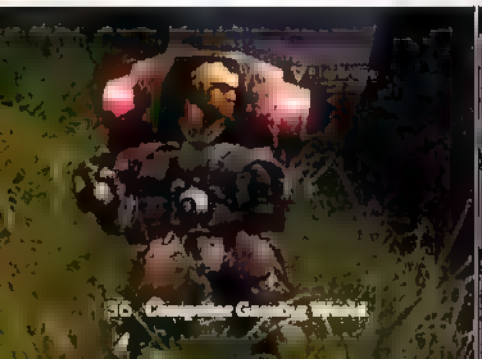
A smorgasbord of news, opinion, and random stuff Edited by Ken Brown

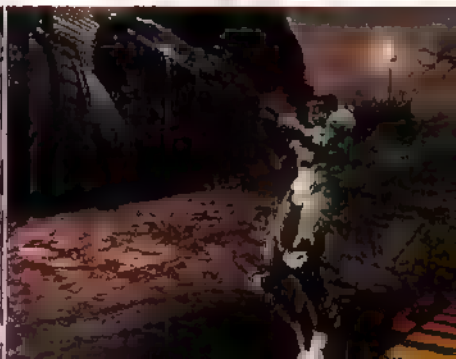
Superdense industrial pipeworks, foliage-rich outdoors, snowy bases, models who look like weird anime heroines—the new *Unreal* engine does it all with both beauty and speed.

UPCOMING

The Flak Is Back!

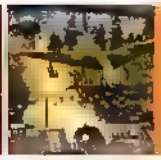
***Unreal Tournament 2003* poised for release** By Thierry Nguyen



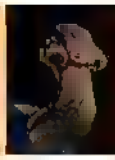


INSIDE

SCOTT McCLOUD
Even Scott can't escape *Bejeweled*. **Page 39**



C&C: GENERALS
Next up from EA's RTS factory. **Page 40**



STAR WARS: MMORPG
BioWare's game is coming later than you think. **Page 46**

MORE TOMB RAIDER
Yeah, that's right. Lara's back. Deal with it. **Page 48**

Two and a half years after the *Unreal Tournament* blasted its way to success on PCs, the next wave of *Unreal* games is finally coming, starting this summer. *Unreal Tournament 2003* is to be *Unreal Tournament*'s sequel, and *Unreal II* is undergoing significant changes.

After Epic VP Mark Rein announced that *UT2003* (formerly *UT2*) would hit shelves in June and that *Unreal II* was being pushed back to Christmas, *CGW* went to the Game Developer's Conference in San Jose, California, to get some hands-on time with *UT2003*. Epic is currently focused on developing its new engine, which will be used in their next project, tentatively titled *Unreal Warfare*. Digital Extremes designer James Schmalz sat us down for a primer on *UT2003*.

The name change reflects the fact that Epic thinks of *Unreal Tournament* as more than a first-person shooter—it's also a futuristic sports game to them. Most FPS games focus on action-filled narrative, but *UT* presents the action as an arena-style sport. Epic says that *UT*, just like any game in a sports franchise, will have a yearly designation in the title. Taking the sports analogy further, *UT* now has an active roster of bots in the single-player game. Players can take on the role of manager and draft bots as free agents to fight with them. Each bot has a specific salary, gameplay style ("sneaky" or "aggressive"), and preferred weapon, among other features, and it will grow and develop as the tournament progresses.

Epic has revised much of the gameplay in favor of this new focus. They scrapped Assault mode because it had a more military than sporting event feel, and they tweaked Domination mode and renamed it Double Domination. Rather than a series of control points to be captured, there are now just two. To score, players have to capture and hold both control points for five seconds, which forces them to be focused and tactical in their thinking. Another new gameplay mode is Bombing Run, which is akin to football with weapons. Players need to run a bomb across the field to their opponent's goal and can easily pass the bomb among themselves in case the opposition is sniping the bomb runner.

Weapons are more balanced, mostly to encourage teamwork and discourage "room spamming." The rocket launcher now launches only three rockets instead of six ("so people can stop spamming a room with six rockets," commented Schmalz). The fragments in the flak cannon's primary fire bounce off walls only once, not several times.

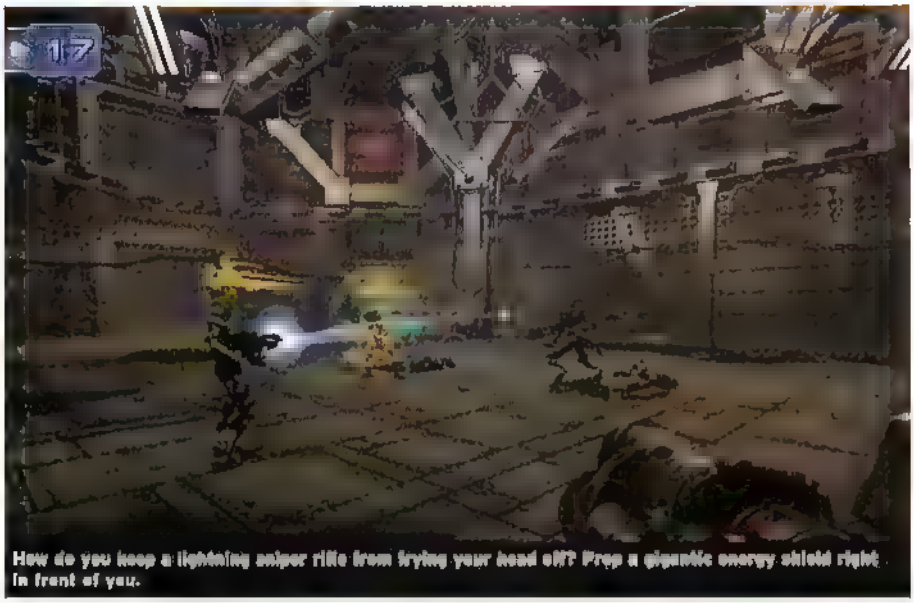
The impact hammer and pulse rifle have been balanced to encourage teamwork. The impact hammer's secondary fire is an energy shield; it can absorb any weapon fire head-on, but it drains ammo, works only directly in front of you, and prevents you from using any other weapon. The pulse rifle still shoots either energy bullets or a continuous beam. But if you aim the beam on a friendly player, it powers him up, and when he shoots his pulse rifle, he'll fire a yellow beam that does triple damage. If your buddy fires his yellow beam at another friendly, the third guy in the chain shoots a red beam, "which can basically kill anything in a single hit," said Schmalz. While it'll be cool to have a three-man fire team kicking ass with the red beam, it'll mean that two guys remain vulnerable while powering up their buddy.

The Enforcer pistol has been replaced with an assault rifle, replete with rapid-fire bullets as the primary fire and grenades as the secondary fire. The sniper rifle is now a lightning gun, while most other weapons have undergone only visual changes.

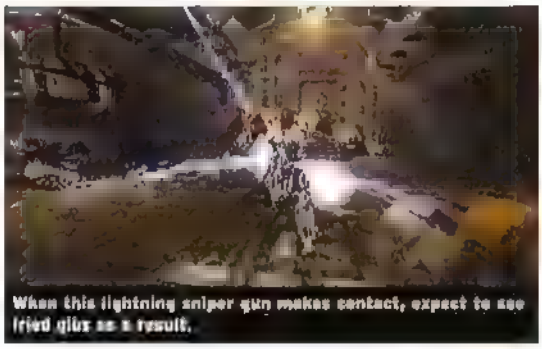
The Epic developers have completed approximately 30 levels as of press time, with about 15 to 20 more to go. The game takes place across several planets, each with its own design for levels and player models. Player models used to be limited to male, female, and alien, with different color schemes, but now there is much greater variety, with some player types looking like they stepped off the set of *StarGate* and others looking like McFarlane-designed demon clowns and super-high-tech anime robots.

The next-gen *Unreal* engine allows for environments like spooky alien rock formations, and dense, industrial pipeworks for the mainstay factory levels. With a GeForce4, scenery was beautiful and ran at more than 100 frames per second, so it's playable on current machines and will take advantage of whatever Nvidia brings us in the future.

Unreal Tournament 2003 is shaping up to be a worthy follow-up to its *CGW* Game of the Year predecessor.



How do you keep a lightning sniper rifle from frying your head off? Prop a gigantic energy shield right in front of you.



When this lightning sniper gun makes contact, expect to see fried guts as a result.

Epic thinks of *Unreal Tournament* as more than just a first-person shooter.

GAME STATS

GENRE **Action**
RELEASE DATE **Q3 2002**
PUBLISHER **Infogrames**
DEVELOPER **Digital Extremes/Epic**

Counter-Strike: Condition Zero is the first game Valve will sell via Steam, its online broadband download scheme.

TECHNOLOGY

Valve Steams Ahead

Half-Life developer pushes for online game sales By Loyd Case

Gabe Newell foresees a future when everyone has broadband and everyone will buy games online.

At this year's Game Developer's Conference in San Jose, California, Newell, the founder and managing director of Valve Software (the people who brought you *Half-Life*), formally announced Steam, a method for buying and downloading games online. The downside is that it requires a broadband connection. When you buy a game, the core software is downloaded immediately. As you play, the game continues to download in the background, adding upcoming levels, new characters, and so on. Newell suggests that a typical game being played over a 500-kilobit DSL line will install faster than games that come on a retail CD. You use Steam by downloading a small client that enables you to buy the software. It also has other features, such as built-in online game browsers and an instant messaging client. Companies like Nvidia and ATI might use Steam to incrementally upgrade video drivers.

Steam will also limit cheating, as most of the software will reside on centralized servers. A theoretical *Counter-Strike 2* might be completely server based, so cheating becomes more difficult (but as *EverQuest* junkies will tell you, not impossible). Newell did not address potential privacy problems, even as he discussed the ability of game companies using Steam to track players' habits.

Given the relatively slow penetration of broadband in the U.S. (estimates range from 10 to 15 percent), retailers like EB and Best Buy don't have to worry quite yet. However, overseas households—particularly in far eastern countries like Korea and Japan—are getting broadband at a much faster clip. Korea has a stated goal of 80 percent of households having 20 *megabit* access by 2005.

What does this mean for gamers? In the short run, not much. Valve will be releasing *Counter-Strike: Condition Zero* simultaneously via Steam and retail

REALITY CHECK

Reality Check compares the ratings of the major gaming press with GameRankings.com, which averages all published reviews for a particular title.

GAME	CGW	PC Gamer	CGM	Gamespot	IGN	GameRankings.com
Command & Conquer: Renegade	B-	B	*	B	B-	B-
Disciples II	B+	B+	B+	B+	A-	A-
Frank Herbert's Dune	F	F	D-	D-	B+	C
Grandia II	C	C-	C-	B	B	B
Kohan: Ahriman's Gift	B+	B	A	B	B+	B+
Serious Sam: TSE	B	B	B	A	A	B+
Star Wars Starfighter	C	B	*	C+	B	B-

* NO RATING AVAILABLE AT PRESS TIME

DISCOVERING GAMES

#6

ABSTRACT REASONING

It's interesting how a simple game like *Bejeweled* can command our *attention.*

by Scott McCloud

CGW feeds me lots of cool games, but for *several days* last month, this *low-tech shareware puzzle game* was all I could *think about.*

Ha! Five in a row!

THWIP!

THUNK!

CHUNG!

"Ahem." When you're ready for some *real* polygons, let us know, won't you. Luv?

With increasing levels of *complexity* and *realism* in newer games, it's a wonder such *visually simple* creations can survive at all, much less *thrive.*

In *decades past,* such *simple, abstract forms* weren't just a matter of *design* -- they were all the technology could *handle.* Today, it's more likely to be a matter of *choice.*

As in *any* creative field, there are bound to be those who revere the simplicity of the *"good ole days,"* an instinct no doubt motivated in some part by *nostalgia.*

But even though the progress of gaming technology has led us consistently down the road to *realism,* it's not clear that *simpler, abstract forms* will ever *disappear* from the *entertainment landscape.*

Not *everything* we make has to be a *perfect replica* of the world around us.

We often *cut* the world into shapes that, while they may reflect nature's rules, are still deliberately *new* and *artificially conceived.*

And *elegant simplicity* is still valued in everything from *art* to *fashion* to *music.*

It may also be a bit *comforting* in a world where the *rules* and *resources* of our day-to-day games keep *changing* to enter a world where no matter how *complex* the *gameplay* is, the rules and resources are reliably *simple* and *unchanging.*

Most *importantly,* though, we're *abstract thinkers,* using *signs* and *symbols* to *understand* the *world.*

And when a *good game* comes along that offers a world of *nothing but* shapes and signs --

-- it may be hard to escape its *diabolical spell.*

The trusty B-52 is still around to do the dirty work of bombing the enemy. Look in the water—is that a rock lobster?

UPCOMING

C&C Does WWIII

***Command & Conquer: Generals* is next up from EA's RTS factory** By Rob Smolka

Brace yourself, *C&C* fans: EA is taking its hugely popular real-time strategy games in a whole new direction next time around with the recently announced *Command & Conquer: Generals*. Unlike the previous iterations that focused on fictional combatants—Nod and GDI—or historically based what-if scenarios, *Generals* will focus on the near future: real-life, 21st-century warfare, starring the superpowers of the United States and China. Also involved in the fray will be a faction calling itself the Global Liberation Army, a huge underground organization more concerned with spreading terror than actually liberating anyone (obviously our current efforts to rid the world of this menace have been unsuccessful).

Generals' success at the cash register is almost guaranteed—the franchise has sold some 17 million games already. But that doesn't mean that developer EA Pacific (the team responsible for *Red Alert 2* and *Yuri's Revenge*) is content to rest on its laurels. The goal is to deliver the solid gameplay that fans have come to expect, while raising the bar in the eye-candy department. According to Mark Skaggs, general manager of EA Pacific and executive producer of the game, "*Generals* will give gamers a Hollywood version of modern war with intense combat and spectacular special effects."

Each of the three combatants will have access to the personnel and weapons of war found on today's battlefields, as well as some items that today's military has in development. The U.S. will have elite pilots who can double as tank drivers or snipers if they are shot down, crusader tanks that can cross any terrain, and detention camps that help show the enemy the errors of their ways. The Chinese player will have the seismic tank, a siege weapon perfect for knocking down buildings; the propaganda blimp, which drops encouraging messages down to the troops and makes them fight harder; and hackers that will wreak havoc with the enemy's radar, intelligence, and communications. And don't count out the GLA—even if their tech is outdated, they make up for it with sheer numbers. Their tools of war consist of angry mobs and massive Scud missile launches that, while inaccurate in aim, cover so much area that aim just doesn't matter.

The team has created a new 3D engine, called Sage, to deliver the visuals. This engine can render striking terrain, whether it's a cityscape, desert, or frozen tundra. You'll be able to run over cars with tanks, see the windows get blown out of huge buildings, and witness many other high-lights that will bring the battlefield to life.

Along with a single-player campaign, *Generals* will offer a multiplayer mode over LAN or the Internet, as well as a map editor so you can create your own modern war scenarios. Prepare to take command this winter.

Generals will focus on the near future: real-life, 21st-century warfare, starring the United States and China.

EXTENDED PLAY HOMEBREW

By T. Byrl Baker

New Life for Old Games

Half-Life has to be the best gaming value of all time. There aren't many other games that have been on my hard drive since 1998, and it's all thanks to the endless stream of mods. Most recently, the highly anticipated *Desert Crisis* and the latest beta of the popular *Action Half-Life* appeared, so it looks like things aren't going to slow down in 2002. Oh, and did I mention someone finally unleashed a *Matrix* TC for *Max Payne*?

Desert Crisis
www.desertcrisis.com
At long last, the *Desert Crisis* team has taken the lid off this barrel of whoop-ass. *Desert Crisis* is a big, brash, but definitely not beautiful total conversion for *Half-Life* that aims to depict combat in the near future and nails a pull's-eye. Traditional assault rifles, frag grenades, and shotguns are mixed with laser pistols, plasma cannons, and other futuristic weaponry. What really sets it apart are the perks, like stealth, extra speed, and sharp-shooting skills, all of which you can select before the match begins. The level textures are bland, but the animations and gameplay more than make up for it. The drawback is that only experts need apply—both the mod and its players are merciless.

Action Half-Life Beta 3.0
ahl.telefragged.com
If you missed *Action Half-Life* in its earlier incarnations, don't make the same mistake this time. Many of the bugs that plagued previous versions have been eradicated, and everything from the weapons to the levels has been honed to near-perfection. Stunts are as easy to pull off as ever, and newcomers will be diving, rolling, and throwing themselves through plate-glass windows in true cinematic fashion after the first hour of launching the mod. Surviving unfortunately isn't so easy, as there are plenty of wannabe movie stars waiting to take your head off with a single, well-placed shot—or throw it, if they're partial to knives.

True Matrix Total Conversion for Max Payne
www.fileplanet.com
The one we've all been waiting for. *Max Payne*, which co-opted elements from *The Matrix*, has now been co-opted by *The Matrix*. Several earlier mods are packaged in this all-in-one release, providing those who can handle the 80MB-plus download with an experience that is nearly indistinguishable from the lobby action scene in the movie. The lobby map is included, as is the popular Kung-Fu mod, a Neo skin (complete with flowing trench coat), and several new weapons. Look for truematrixmod2.zip at www.fileplanet.com.

It's a lot easier to take on an army

DUNGEON SIEGE

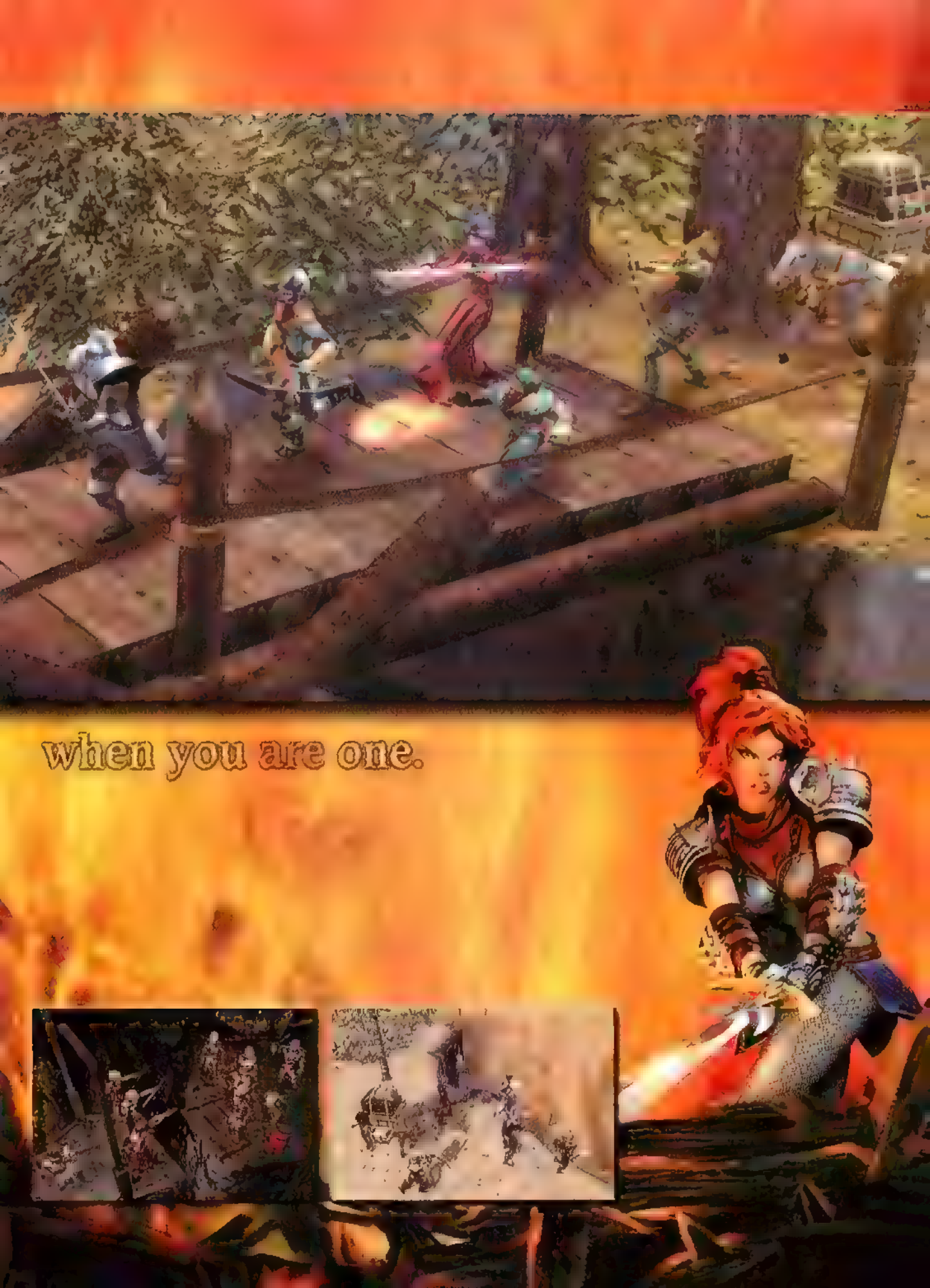
A ROLE-PLAYING GAME FROM CHRIS TAYLOR

Assemble and control a party of up to eight heroes at a time, as you battle your way through the seamless and expansive 3D world of Ehb. From warriors and archers to wizards, and even pack mules to carry your treasure, you and your party will take revenge on the evil lord's minions. Whether you're playing alone or in multiplayer mode, victory is within your grasp. Let the battles begin.

GAS powered GAMES

Microsoft

microsoft.com/games/dungeonsiege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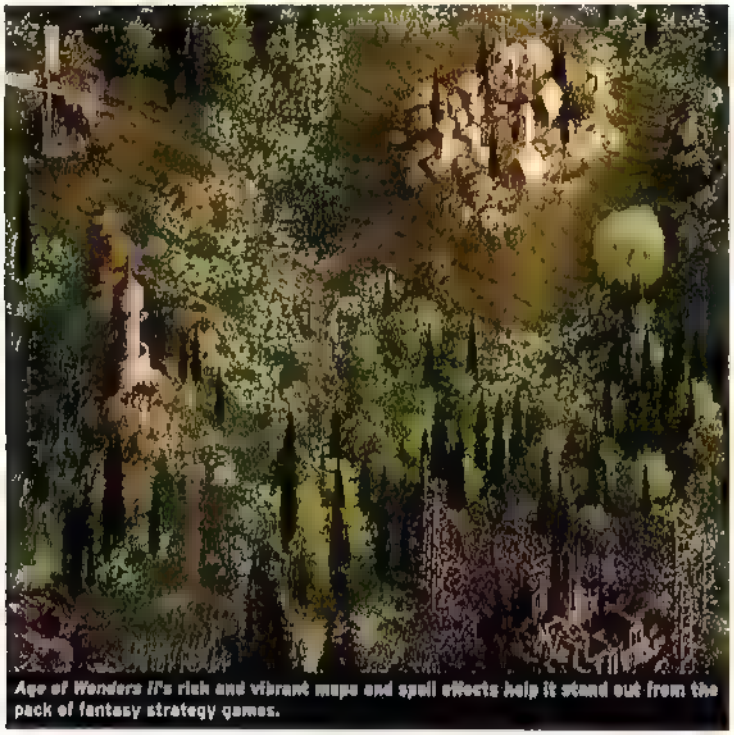


Age of Wonders II's rich and vibrant maps and spell effects help it stand out from the pack of fantasy strategy games.

PREVIEW

Call Him the Merlinator

Age of Wonders II: The Wizard's Throne

By Robert Coffey

Slowly expanding and holding my empire was challenging.

The best news about my hands-on time with a beta version of *Age of Wonders II: The Wizard's Throne*? No sign of the hideous memory leak that killed my enjoyment of the first game. Free to play the game, I found a lot to like.

I dabbled in a number of the game's mini-campaigns. Each of these smaller sequences of maps limits your in-game avatar to using just one of the six realms of magic in the game: Fire, Water, Air, Earth, Life, and Death. While some gamers may be put off by this, learning the nuances and strategies that each spell school afforded only deepened the strategy and forced me to adapt constantly. It's a refreshing change from relying on one favorite superspell, as you do in some other games.

From the very first mission on the campaign, maps were enormous, dotted with teleport stations that made the often arduous march across the landscape much easier. The maps of the *Heroes of Might and Magic* series (*Age of Wonders*' closest cousin) were vast as well, but the maps in *Wizard's Throne* required more tactical thinking, along the lines of the turn-based *Warlords* games.

Slowly expanding and holding my empire was challenging, especially against an AI that, although still in need of some serious balancing, was unrelentingly aggressive and willing to take risks to defeat me. After a few hours of playing, though, I found myself auto-resolving actual combat more frequently and focusing more on the big picture of the game. Maybe it's because the conflicts lack the cartoonish verve of the *Heroes* series or (more likely) because the game isn't finished, but I found those battles to be flat and uninvolving. This wasn't the case in the first *Age of Wonders*, so I'm betting that element will be tweaked and improved prior to release. Visually, the game is still remarkable, with elaborate spell effects and rich, vibrant world maps.

With three other turn-based fantasy games coming out this year, developer Triumph Studios needs to make every minute count until *Age of Wonders II*'s release early this summer to make sure their game stands out from the pack.

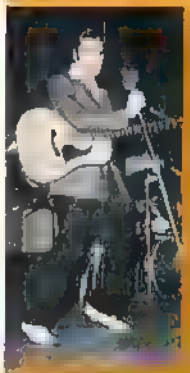
THE GOOD, THE BAD, THE UGLY

THE GOOD
PC GAME HEAVEN

Wow. Someone pinch us. Preferably someone really good-looking. Because right now, this feels like a dream. After a depressing drought of good PC games, we are now experiencing a veritable flood—and boy does it feel good. *Jedi Outcast*, *Freedom Force*, *Dungeon Siege*, *Heroes IV* all in one week, with more big ones like *Unreal Tournament 2003* right around the corner. In case you were wondering: We love our jobs.

THE BAD
TACO BELL CLOSES IN S.F.

The only thing better than playing games all day for money is playing games all day for money while eating cheap, gut-rotting junk food. Of all the cheap, gut-rotting junk food near the CGW office in San Francisco, the cheapest and the most gut-rotting was Taco Bell. Which is why the self-loathing Jeff Green ate there so much. But now, incredibly, we must mourn its passing, as all the S.F. Taco Bells have closed down, probably as a gesture to humanity. Oh, Enchirito, how we loved thee...



THE UGLY
THE BLAME GAME

Ugh, not again. The tragic suicide of a 21-year-old Wisconsin man is not something we take lightly, and in no way do we intend any disrespect here. But the claim that *EverQuest* was somehow responsible for his actions is just the same old spurious cry from the same old ambulance-chasing, publicity-seeking group of blowhards. Comic books, rock-and-roll, rap music—there's always *something* to blame, right? It's called parenting, folks. Look into it.

Seize the Empire!

The Battle of Red Cliffs was one of the most famous and pivotal battles of the Three Kingdoms period.

Sun Quan formed an alliance with Liu Bei and together they fought Cao Cao at the Battle of Red Cliffs. Even though Cao Cao's troops greatly outnumbered them, they defeated him and in the process prevented him from seizing control of the realm.

After the Battle of Red Cliffs, the division of the realm into three parts began to take shape.

Sun Quan

Features:

- Select from over 40 different Warriors skills.
- Multi-map system separates the battlefield and city development.
- Tech-tree taken directly from the Three Kingdoms period.
- Manage Domestic Policies, Diplomacy, Trade and others affecting your Kingdom's overall state.
- Unique Profession Transference system allowing you to go from Laborer to Sergeant and back if needed.

DRAGON THRONE

BATTLE OF RED CLIFFS

IN STORES NOW!

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Blood
Violence

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BIG BUMMER DEPARTMENT

Knights of the Old Republic

The BioWare *Star Wars* RPG is coming—but it's on Xbox first By Thierry Nguyen

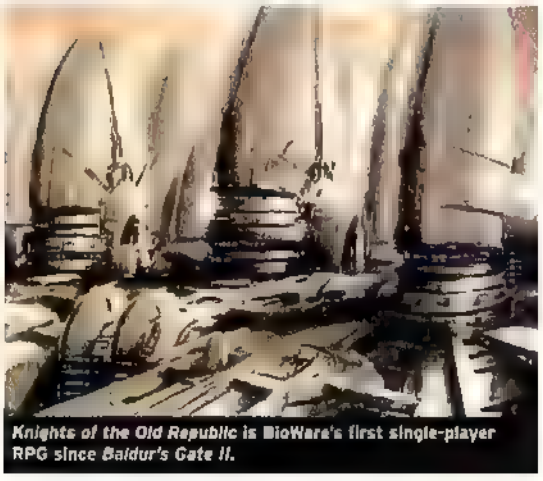
BioWare surprised gamers everywhere in February when they announced that epic-in-the-making *Knights of the Old Republic* will be coming to the Xbox this fall, with the PC version of the RPG pushed out to next spring. Annoyed PC gamers who think that BioWare has sold out to the consoles should remember that the same company released *MDK2* for the DreamCast first and followed with the PC edition a few months later. But *MDK2* didn't suffer from the console-first release; in fact, the PC release turned out to be as good, if not better, than the DreamCast version.

Reasons given for the release-date shuffle range from BioWare wanting *KOTOR* to be the first great RPG for the Xbox to not wanting the PC version on shelves at the same time that *Star Wars Galaxies* is due to hit. Then again, knowing *Star Wars* fans, two great *Star Wars* games at the same time ain't necessarily a bad thing, but we can see why LucasArts would encourage the staggering of the release dates.

Both BioWare and LucasArts have said they are committed to making sure that each version will take full advantage of its specific platform. The only differences mentioned specifically so far regard the interface.

Look for more details on how the game plays later in the year. Here's what we know now: It will be viewed in third-person perspective with BioWare's new Odyssey engine; it will be filled with action-style minigames; the player will control a party of three characters; action will span 10 *Star Wars* worlds; and the story will take place in a time when the Jedi were everywhere.

If BioWare maintains its stellar track record, *Knights of the Old Republic* will be worth waiting for. If you're pondering getting an Xbox for this game, consider that you'll have to wait only a few months for the PC version. Just because BioWare has sold out doesn't mean you have to.



Knights of the Old Republic is BioWare's first single-player RPG since *Baldur's Gate II*.

NEWS FEED

The Sims Hits No. 1

■ In just a little more than two years, *The Sims* has become the best-selling PC game of all time, according to Electronic Arts, ending the long reign of previous leader *Myst*. More than 6.3 million copies (and counting) have been shipped worldwide, putting the popular people simulator in the catbird seat. Not bad for a game that was turned down by nearly every publisher when creator Will Wright first shopped the project around.

Lineage II to Use *Unreal* Engine

■ *Lineage: The Bloodpledge* may be the biggest massively multiplayer game in the world—with 4 million subscribers, as the publisher, South Korea–based NCsoft, constantly tells everyone—but in the U.S. it's still relatively unknown. That should change with *Lineage II*, the recently announced prequel to the first game. NCsoft says the game will be powered by Epic's *Unreal* engine for a state-of-the-art 3D experience. NCsoft made more news this month by announcing that they'll be publishing Cryptic Studios' comic book–style superhero MMORPG, *City of Heroes*, which has been generating lots of early buzz. More on that game as it develops.

Blizzard Fools Their [illegible]

■ Indulging in a proud tradition, Blizzard Entertainment fooled and frightened numerous fans on April 1 with the announcement of a stunning last-minute change to the upcoming *WarCraft III*. The announcement? They were adding an entirely new race to the game—the Pandarens. And who are the Pandarens? A mighty race of...panda bear warriors. What's scary is that they managed to fool more than a few people.

He needs a walk...
Consider yourself
WARNED

PREVIEW

Tomb Raider: The Angel of Darkness

Lara Croft is reborn in a spanking-new sexy spelunker that Eidos swears won't suck

By Rob Smolka

Say what you will about the endless sequels that sucked harder than a Hoover on high and turned the series into little more than a punchline among hardcore gamers–the original *Tomb Raider* was a game that set precedents for both the consoles and PC when it was released back in 1996. Not only did *Tomb Raider* establish the path for third-person adventure games, it created a phenomenon outside normal gaming circles with its voluptuous heroine and showed that you could market a game character that wasn't named Mario or Sonic.

The Angel of Darkness is likely to appeal to a much more mature gamer.

Six years later, Eidos and original developer Core Design are poised to reinvigorate Lara's fans with *Tomb Raider: The Angel of Darkness*. The first step is to bring the look of the series up to modern standards, and the new graphics engine should have no problem in this regard. Lara alone will be made up of about 5,000 polygons, a tenfold increase from earlier games. This monumental leap in the level of detail will carry over to the architecture and the foes she encounters.

Everything about the new *Tomb Raider* is more complex than in the past including the story. Von Croy, Lara's old mentor, summons her to Paris to help track down some 14th-century paintings for a client named Eckhardt. Upon her arrival, she finds her mentor has been murdered and framed for the crime of the missing paintings, and now she must try to get to the bottom of things. As she follows the clues, she'll have to get involved in some seedy business that's a far cry from the world of raiding tombs.

Overall, *The Angel of Darkness* is likely to appeal to a much more mature gamer. Adrian Smith, operations director at Core Design, says, "Our vision is to take the player somewhere dark, a place they might not necessarily wish to go, but a place they will have to venture if they are to bring Lara back. Lara will have some tough moral choices to make. It's no longer a clear-cut case of good versus evil–this is a more complex tale, which will ask more complex questions of the player. It will be a new experience for people who have played *Tomb Raider* in the past."

We've been promised big things before by Eidos about the *Tomb Raider* games, and most of the time we've been disappointed when we got our hands on the final product. But with the return of Core, the implementation of a brand-new graphics engine, and the promise of story and character depth that has been sorely needed for many years, we have to admit that it sounds like Lara may regain her place among the elite. We'll see whether we're crying wolf again sometime toward the end of this year.

GET A LIFE

Hey, nerd! There's life outside your panic room.

Word Freak

Stefan Fatsis sets out to chronicle the world of competitive *Scrabble* and gets sucked in, resulting in this incredibly riveting real-life account. The best part? These *Scrabble* players make us computer gamers actually look cool.

Progress Quest

Have you wanted to take us up on our life-getting suggestions but just couldn't stop playing games? Download *Progress Quest* at www.progressquest.com and unchain yourself–it's the RPG that plays itself! *Progress Quest* will let you take that first step into the sunlight without letting your Dung Elf Voodoo Princess go to seed.

Arousal

Worrying what your sick sexual fantasies say about you? Check out *Arousal* by Dr. Michael J. Bader. He posits that fantasies are linked to childhood events that interfere with our ability to enjoy ourselves. So Chim-Chim fantasizes about Lara Croft because she's not real, and therefore, he can't hurt her feelings with his unyielding sexual power.

The Osbournes

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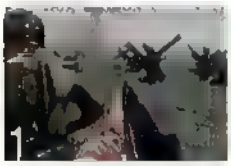
RANKINGS

CGW Top 20

Medal of Honor is still kicking Axis arse and taking names



Storm the beaches in ***MOH Allied Assault.***

Harry Potter: Never underestimate geeks with glasses

Hot Date is the only date many gamers got last month.

Rank	Last Month	Game	Rating
1	1	**Medal of Honor Allied Assault** ($50, Electronic Arts)	★★★★½
2	3	**Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone** ($28, Electronic Arts)	★★★½☆
3	2	**The Sims: Hot Date Expansion Pack** ($27, Electronic Arts)	★★★★½
4	4	**The Sims** ($40, Electronic Arts)	★★★★★
5	5	**Roller Coaster Tycoon** ($21, Infogrames)	★★★★☆
6	6	**Zoo Tycoon** ($28, Microsoft)	★★★½☆
7	8	**The Sims: Livin' Large Expansion Pack** ($27, Electronic Arts)	★★★★½
8		**Serious Sam: The Second Encounter** ($18, Gathering of Developers)	★★★★☆
9	1	**Sid Meier's Civilization III** ($45, Infogrames)	★★★★★
10		**Sierra Sports: NASCAR Racing 2002 Season** ($45, Vivendi Universal)	★★★★☆
11	10	**The Sims: House Party Expansion Pack** ($28, Electronic Arts)	★★★★½
12	12	**Backyard Basketball** ($18, Infogrames)	NR
13	13	**Diablo II: Lord of Destruction** ($40, Vivendi Universal)	★★★★½
14	9	**Empire Earth** ($48, Vivendi Universal)	★★★★☆
15	4	**Roller Coaster Tycoon Loopy Landscapes Expansion Pack** ($19, Infogrames)	★★★★☆
16	7	**Return to Castle Wolfenstein** ($57, Activision)	★★★½☆
17	16	**Backyard Football 2002** ($18, Infogrames)	★★★★☆
18		**Command & Conquer: Renegade** ($46, Electronic Arts)	★★★½☆
19		**Sim Theme Park** ($18, Electronic Arts)	★★★★★
20	18	**Age of Empires II: Age of Kings** ($35, Microsoft)	★★★★★

FEBRUARY RETAIL SALES RESULTS BY NPD INTELECT

NOTABLE QUOTE

"We are thrilled to announce our first foray into non-interactive entertainment: *Halo Babies*, a new animated series scheduled to debut this fall." –Bungie's April Fools' gag

5, 10, 15 YEARS AGO IN CGW

Five Years Ago, June 1997

We are ashamed to be gamers. Forget the very regrettable *Daikatana* cover this month–the real shame lurked on page 13, in the ad for Game Wizards. These CD-ROM products helped you beat the year's hottest games, using actual game video to guide you. Fine. But why, oh dear sweet lord above, why oh why did they pay sad, desperate phone-sex employees to dress up in leather S&M outfits to host the thing as FMV "Game Wizards"? Five minutes of these half-naked dominatrixes telling you which block to push in *Tomb Raider* and you couldn't get the ick off you with a belt sander.

Ten Years Ago, June 1992

Once upon a time, long before Enron, people liked the stock market. Well, at least we thought so. This issue saw the premiere of *CGW* Stock Watch, a monthly feature in which we tracked the NASDAQ fortunes of five companies. More interesting would have been a line graph tracking the rapidly waning interest of readers in this column–it would have looked about as exciting as the five graphs littering that page.

Fifteen Years Ago, June 1987

Ads for two magazines spotlighted the growing pains of gaming. On page 21 was a full-page ad for Run, a "unique computer gaming magazine" that shipped each quarterly issue with a floppy containing new game scenarios, notes, and design kits. This would be the future. The past? Turn to page 5 for the tiny ad for *Paper Mayhem*, "The Informative PBM Magazine." They'd been in business since 1983. They wouldn't be for much longer.

Unreal TOURNAMENT 2003

JUNE

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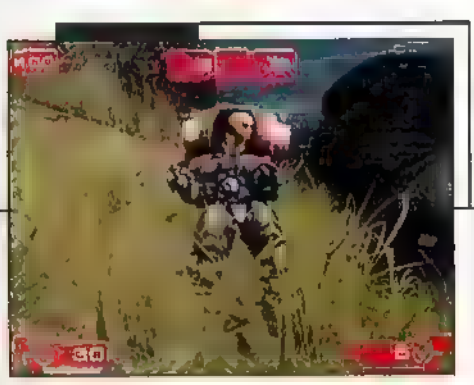
"...beyond anything you've seen before...it's the new face of futuristic combat."
—PC Gamer



SPORTS COMBAT SERVED RAW

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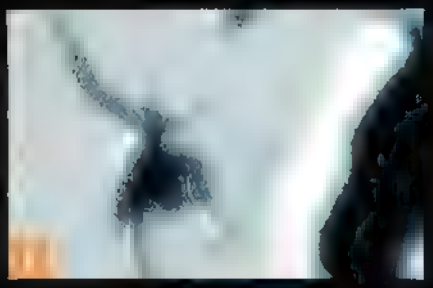
Visit www.esrb.org or call 1-800-771-3772 for more info.

EPIC GAMES

ATARI

PIPELINE

Our latest guesses about when those games are finally shipping



Estimating software release dates is like trying to predict which movie will be snubbed at next year's Oscars (though we have a gut feeling it may involve little men with hairy feet again). These dates represent the best available info we had at press time. If you're a publisher, send us your updates at cgwletters@ziffdavis.com.

XIII Gaming just got weirder: Ubi Soft recently announced *XIII*, an action game that will create an interactive graphic novel based on a popular Belgian comic book. The game will actually look like cell-animation (think anime) and will somehow use the *Unreal II* technology to do this. It makes little sense and sounds very unusual, but we sure are intrigued. More should be revealed at E3.

HITMAN 2 After cutting their earnings forecast again, Eidos looks to be in dire straits. They need a hit badly, and as *Hitman 2* is the best chance they have, they're postponing the game until September, ostensibly to make it as good as possible. However, despite one good preview trailer, the game's Website is still completely devoid of any interesting information on the game. Eidos needs to get the marketing going.

MASTER OF ORION III Senior producer Constantine Hantzopoulos released a statement saying that "during a regular examination of the state of the *Master of Orion III* project, both Infogrames and Quicksilver agreed that the game would benefit from extending its release date to the third quarter of 2002." In other words, they're running late. But we're glad Infogrames is giving this one the time it needs.

XIII	Ubi Soft	Winter 2002
Age of Mythology	Microsoft	September 2002
Age of Wonders II: The Wizard's Throne	Take Two	Spring 2002
Arx Fatalis	Fishtank Interactive	Summer 2002
Asheron's Call 2	Microsoft	Winter 2002
Beam Breakers	Fishtank Interactive	Summer 2002
Dungeon Siege	Gamas	Summer 2002
Call of Cthulhu	Fishtank Interactive	Summer 2002
Chaos Empire	Sierra	Fall 2002
Chaser	Fishtank Interactive	Winter 2002
Combat Flight Simulator 3	Microsoft	Fall 2002
Combat Mission 2: Barbarossa to Berlin	Big Time Software	Summer 2002
Command & Conquer: Generals	Westwood	Winter 2002
Commander Jill	Stardock	Spring 2002
Consul	JoWood	Spring 2002
Counter-Strike: Condition Zero	Sierra	Fall 2002
Deus Ex 2	Eidos	Winter 2002
DOOM 3	id software	Eventually
Dragon Empires	Codemasters	Spring 2002
Dragon's Lair 3D	Blue Byte	On hold
Duke Nukem Forever	3D Realms	Fall 2008
Duke Nukem: Manhattan Project	3D Realms	Winter 2002
Earth and Beyond	Westwood	Spring 2002
The Elder Scrolls III: Morrowind	Bethesda	Summer 2002
Emperor: Rise of the Middle Kingdom	Sierra	Fall 2002
Farscape	Simon & Schuster	Summer 2002

Far West	JoWood	Spring 2002
Freelancer	Microsoft	Winter 2002
FUEL	DreamCatcher	Fall 2002
Galactic Civilizations	Stardock	Fall 2002
Gore	DreamCatcher	Spring 2002
Grand Theft Auto III	Rockstar Games	Summer 2002
Halo	Microsoft	Summer 2002
Hidden & Dangerous 2	Take Two	Spring 2002
Hitman 2: Silent Assassin	Eidos	Fall 2002
Hotel Tycoon	JoWood	Spring 2002
Icewind Dale II	Interplay	May 2002
Imperium Galactica 3: Genesis	GOY	Spring 2002
Impossible Creatures	Microsoft	Summer 2002
Industry Tycoon 2	JoWood	Spring 2002
Legends of Loch Ness	DreamCatcher	Spring 2002
Lineage 2	Destination Games	Spring 2003
Links 2003	Microsoft	Fall 2002
Lock On: Modern Air Combat	Ubi Soft	Spring 2002
Master of Orion III	Infogrames	Fall 2002
MechWarrior IV: Inner Sphere	Microsoft	Spring 2002
Medieval: Total War	Activision	Summer 2002
Midgard	Funcom	On hold
Natural Resistance	JoWood	Spring 2002
Neocron	GOY	Spring 2002
Neverwinter Nights	Infogrames	Summer 2002
Nexagon: The Pit	Strategy First	Spring 2002
NOLF 2	Sierra	Fall 2002
O.R.B.	Strategy First	Summer 2002
Outcast II: The Lost Paradise	No publisher yet	Winter 2002
Planetside	Sony Online Entertainment	Fall 2002

Project IGI 2	Codemasters	Summer 2002
Project Earth	DreamCatcher	Spring 2002
Quake IV	Activision	Someday
Rainbow Six: Raven Shield	Ubi Soft	Fall 2002
Reality Deathmatch	JoWood	Spring 2002
Republic: The Revolution	Eidos	Summer 2002
Rise of Nations	Microsoft	Spring 2003
Shadowbane	Ubi Soft	Summer 2002
SimCity 4	EA	Winter 2002
Sims Online	EA	Summer 2002
Soldier of Fortune II: Double Helix	Activision	May 2002
Sovereign	Sony Online Entertainment	Someday
Spring Break	Eidos	Spring 2002
Star Wars Galaxies	LucasArts	Winter 2002
Star Wars Knights of the Old Republic	LucasArts	Spring 2003
Superpower	DreamCatcher	Spring 2002
SWAT: Urban Justice	Sierra	September 2002
Tabula Rasa	Destination Games	Summer 2003
Team Fortress 2	Sierra	Spring 2003
Thief III	Eidos	Winter 2002
UFO: Freedom Ridge	Virgin Interactive	Holiday 2002
Unreal II	Infogrames	Holiday 2002
Unreal Tournament 2003	Infogrames	Summer 2002
WarCraft III	Blizzard	Summer 2002
Warlords IV	Ubi Soft	Summer 2002
Warlords Battlecry II	Ubi Soft	March 2002
World of WarCraft	Blizzard	Eventually

NEW UPDATE

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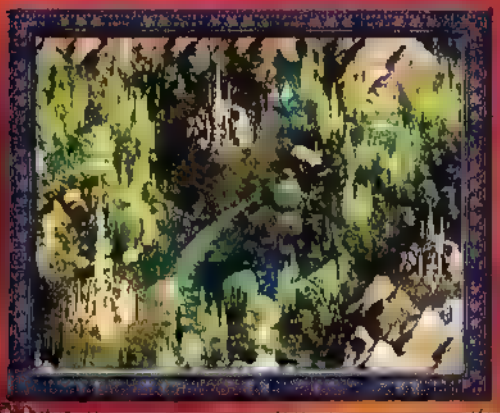
-Computer Games Magazine



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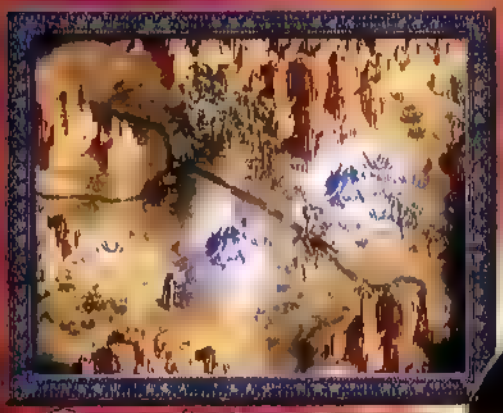

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TRIUMPH STUDIOS

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Computer Gaming World and LucasArts are teaming up to bring you this once-in-a-millennium chance to participate, for free, in the beta test phase of *Star Wars Galaxies*, LucasArts' highly anticipated online role-playing game set in the *Star Wars* universe.

Don't delay! Be one of the first humans in this or any other galaxy to have the chance to play the most immersive *Star Wars* experience ever created. And when the game ships, winners will also receive a special collectors' edition autographed by the *Star Wars Galaxies* design team.

Check the magazine in your hands right now. A few lucky gamers are going to find a Golden Ticket for the beta test right here. If you find one, that's it—you've won already. The Force is strong in you.

But if you don't see a Golden Ticket, fear not, Padawan! Do not let your anger get the best of you. You still have a chance. All you have to do is fill out a postcard, any postcard, with your name, phone number, and email or snail mail address, and send it to:

CGW-Star Wars Galaxies Sweepstakes
50 Beale Street, 12th Floor
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We'll draw a number of winners at random from all entries received by June 14, 2002. (That's received, kids, not postmarked.) For complete sweepstakes rules, please see page 183.

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EVERYONE
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CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
Animated Violence

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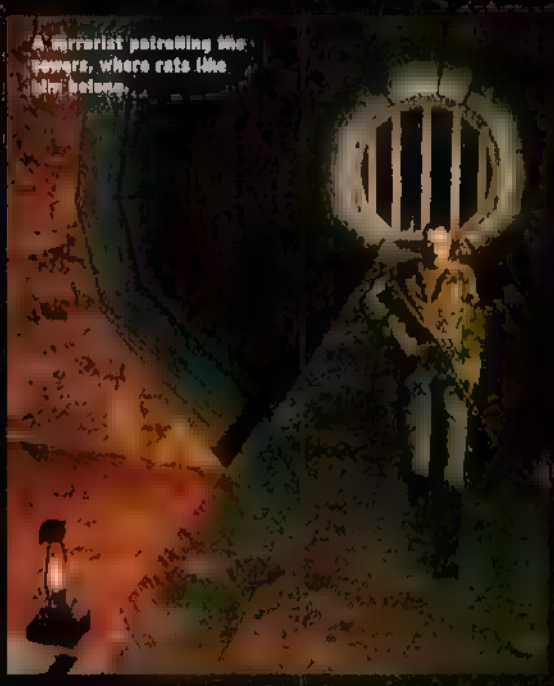
The *Ghost Recon* engine a… much higher resolution for



A terrorist patrolling the towers, where rats like him belong.

SUM OF ALL

The unstoppable Clancy machine turns out another tactical shoot-and-sneak fest

FEARS

By Tom Price

Other than Sid Meier and Will Wright, the only other personality in the game industry whose name on a box cover guarantees healthy sales numbers is Tom Clancy. Red Storm's series of tactical simulators based on Clancy's novels, beginning with *Rainbow Six* and most recently resulting in *Ghost Recon*, have not only been highly successful, they've remained at the forefront of a genre they helped create. The latest game is spawning not only from one of Clancy's books, but from a movie too.

Due out this summer, the film *Sum of All Fears* finds Clancy's intrepid hero, Jack Ryan—this time being played by Ben Affleck—trying to stop terrorists from detonating a nuclear bomb at the Super Bowl. The game, which will be released concurrently, doesn't put you in the role of Jack Ryan or play through the movie scene by scene. Instead, it will put you in the shoes of a counterterrorist team member who must track the terrorist conspirators from West Virginia to Saudi Arabia to South Africa.

Red Storm built *SOAF* with an enhanced version of the *Ghost Recon* engine and has continued to simplify and strip down gameplay to be much more accessible than the original *Rainbow Six* or *Rogue Spear* games. Planning has been eliminated completely from the game; you'll get predetermined mission parameters directly from headquarters. You won't outfit the individual members of your three-man team. Instead, you'll simply choose a weapon set (assault, stealth, sniper, and so on), and each member of your team will be outfitted accordingly.

Control over teammates is limited as well. Your commands will involve simple tasks like "breach and clear." Otherwise, your squad is mostly there for additional cover. Some missions involve other squads, which are completely scripted. Once you complete a task like killing a guard or opening a locked door, they'll automatically move to their next position and execute their orders. Even in the somewhat early version of the game that I saw, the scripting looked seamless and gave supporting squads the appearance of intelligent bots.

With bank security guards like this, no wonder those ATM fees are so high.

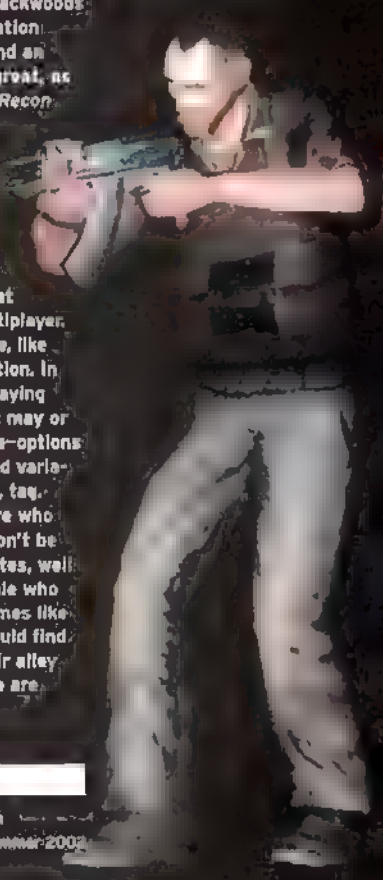
Since *SOAF* marks a return to the close-quarters-style combat made popular by the *Rainbow Six* games, weapons that weren't modeled in *Ghost Recon* have been programmed into *SOAF*. Flash-bangs are in now, as well as shotgun technology. In fact, the devastating Pancor Jackhammer automatic shotgun is there, just in case you want to turn a terrorist into raw hamburger.

The levels that Red Storm showed me included a TV station, a backwoods militia compound, a power station nestled in a desert canyon, and an ornate bank. The levels look great, as do all the models. The *Ghost Recon* engine really has a lot more power than the engine in older Red Storm games like *Rogue Spear*.

While the single-player storyline appears compelling and should draw in fans of the movie as well as the book, what really excited me was the multiplayer. All the typical modes are there, like team deathmatch and domination. In addition, the developers are playing around with new versions that may or may not make it into the game—options like cat-and-mouse, an inverted variation on the playground classic, tag.

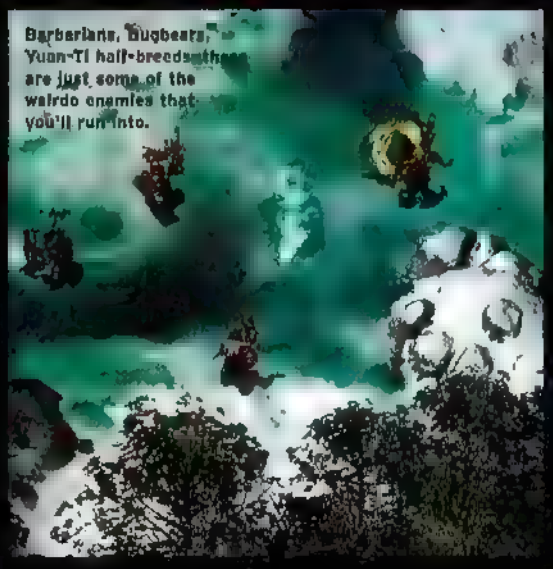
Those tac sim fans out there who are worried that this game won't be hardcore enough for their tastes, well, they might be right. But people who play more action-oriented games like *Counter-Strike* or *TacOps* should find *Sum of All Fears* right up their alley when the game and the movie are released this July.

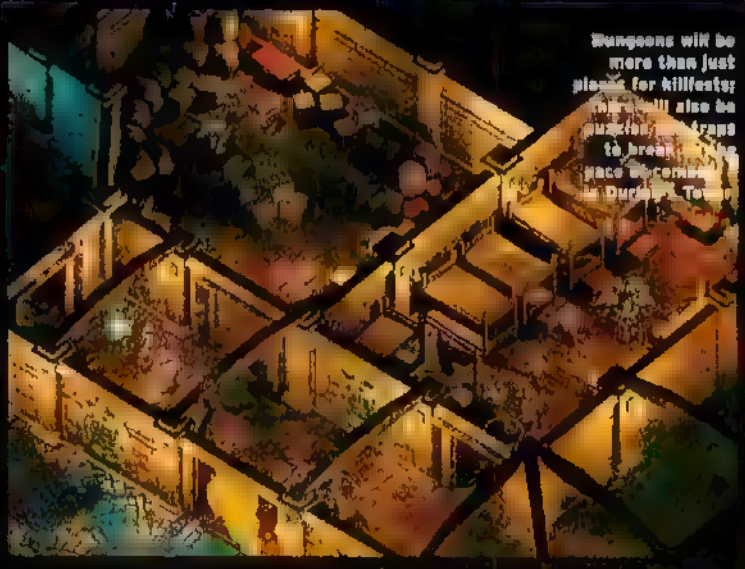
Red Storm has continued to simplify and strip down gameplay to be much more accessible.



GAME STATS

PUBLISHER: Ubi Soft DEVELOPER: Red Storm
URL: www.redstorm.com RELEASE DATE: Summer 2002





ICEWIND DA

Get your third-edition, chop-em-up, *D&D* dork party started By Thierry Nguyen

Some days, you want epics like *The Lord of the Rings*, and other days, you want pure sword-swinging action à la *Conan the Barbarian*. *Icewind Dale* was the tightly focused, combat-only sibling to *Baldur's Gate*, and Black Isle is bringing more kill-kill killology with *Icewind Dale II*.

IWD2 uses third-edition *D&D*, so everything is easier to understand and more playable. Any race can be any class, and any class can use any weapon. On one hand, this allows for killer combinations like Halfling monks. On the other hand, it means that although your wizard can use halberds, he might not do very well with them.

Other factors in character generation are sub-races and feats. Sub-races include both the well known (Drow Elves) and the new (Aasimar Humans or Ghostwise Halflings). The sub-races are balanced in having extra abilities by being a level behind a default race (i.e., a Gold Dwarf paladin will be a level behind an equivalent generic Dwarf paladin). Feats are similar to *Fallout*'s perks in that every few levels, you get a new ability, such as Dirty Fighting (the chance to blind or disable your opponent) or Arterial Strike (less damage but causes a bleeding wound).

The third-edition rules mean that the kits from *Baldur's Gate II* aren't in anymore. However, designer J.E. Sawyer notes, "With all of the classes, sub-races, and feats, you can pretty much recreate any kit you want."

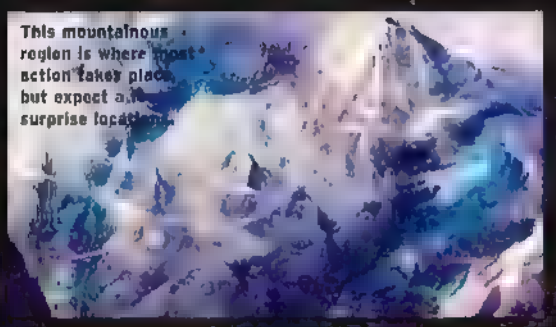
"Instead of flashy-looking spells, we made a bunch of spells that are actually useful," commented Sawyer. Such spells include Aegis, a Level 8 spell that instantly casts just about every protective spell, making the caster invincible for a short while. Or Flensing, which slashes the target for D4 damage per level and causes bleeding wounds. A Level 20 wizard can cast that on an important target and watch the victim get hit by blades 20 times in a row.

The plot of the game entails a battle between the Ten Towns and a goblinoid horde, and your ragtag band of mercenaries is sent in to do goblinoid smiting. There's a larger variety of locations this time, including a haunted forest, a jungle hideout, and an ancient ice temple and monastery.

The original *IWD* was all about Monty Haul-style hack-and-slash, while this one will be hack-and-slash with puzzles. Taking a cue from the *Trials of the Luremaster* expansion, *IWD2* will have minipuzzles to break up the action. For example, you run into a giant tic-tac-toe grid, and to place your X on a square, you have to beat up a monster in one-on-one combat. The physical area is the same as before, but with the addition of the puzzles, it should take longer to get through than in the original.

The new interface is more akin to that in *Planescape: Torment* than previous Infinity Engine games, with most of the interface located on the bottom of the screen. Most of it is occupied by the chat box and an array of menu buttons, with character icons and combat options neatly stacked on top. The new inventory screen has three rows of slots (instead of two) and allows for multiple weapon combinations. Finally, you can easily switch among a two-handed weapon, a bow, and a sword-and-shield combo without having to go into the inventory and drag items out as you did in previous games.

Icewind Dale II looks like the sequel that actually builds on the lessons from the original. While you're waiting for epic sprawls like *Neverwinter Nights*, *IWD2* will be there for your hacking pleasure.



This mountainous region is where most action takes place, but expect a few surprise locations.

Finally, you can easily switch between using a bow, a two-handed weapon, and a sword-and-shield combo.

Some of the locations (like the old mill that the little boy was trapped under) have undergone a facelift.

GAME STATS

PUBLISHER: Interplay DEVELOPER: Black Isle Studios
URL: www.interplay.com RELEASE DATE: May 2002

LE II

grand theft auto III

MATURE
M
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Blood
Violence
Strong Language

PC
CD
ROM

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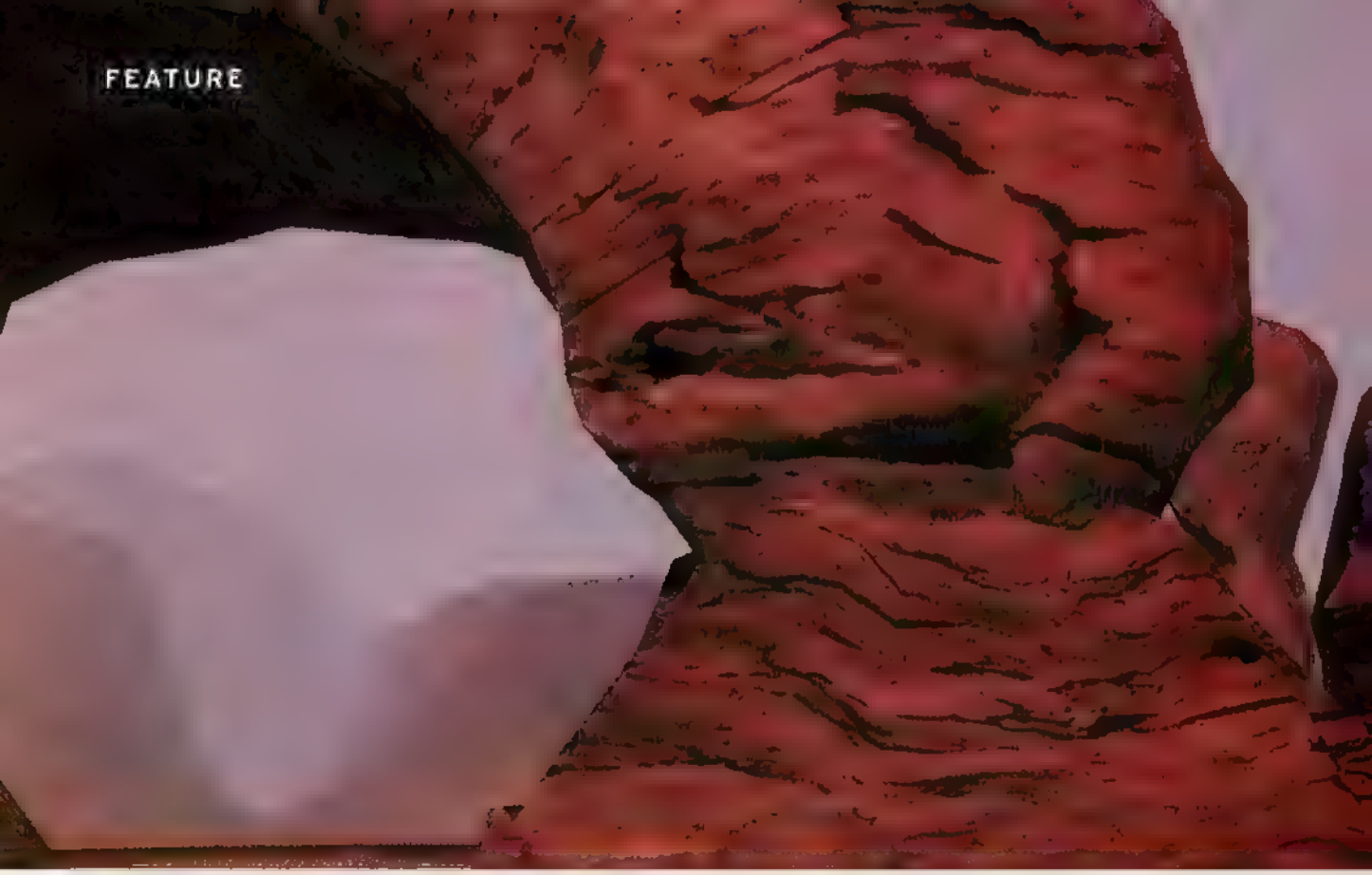
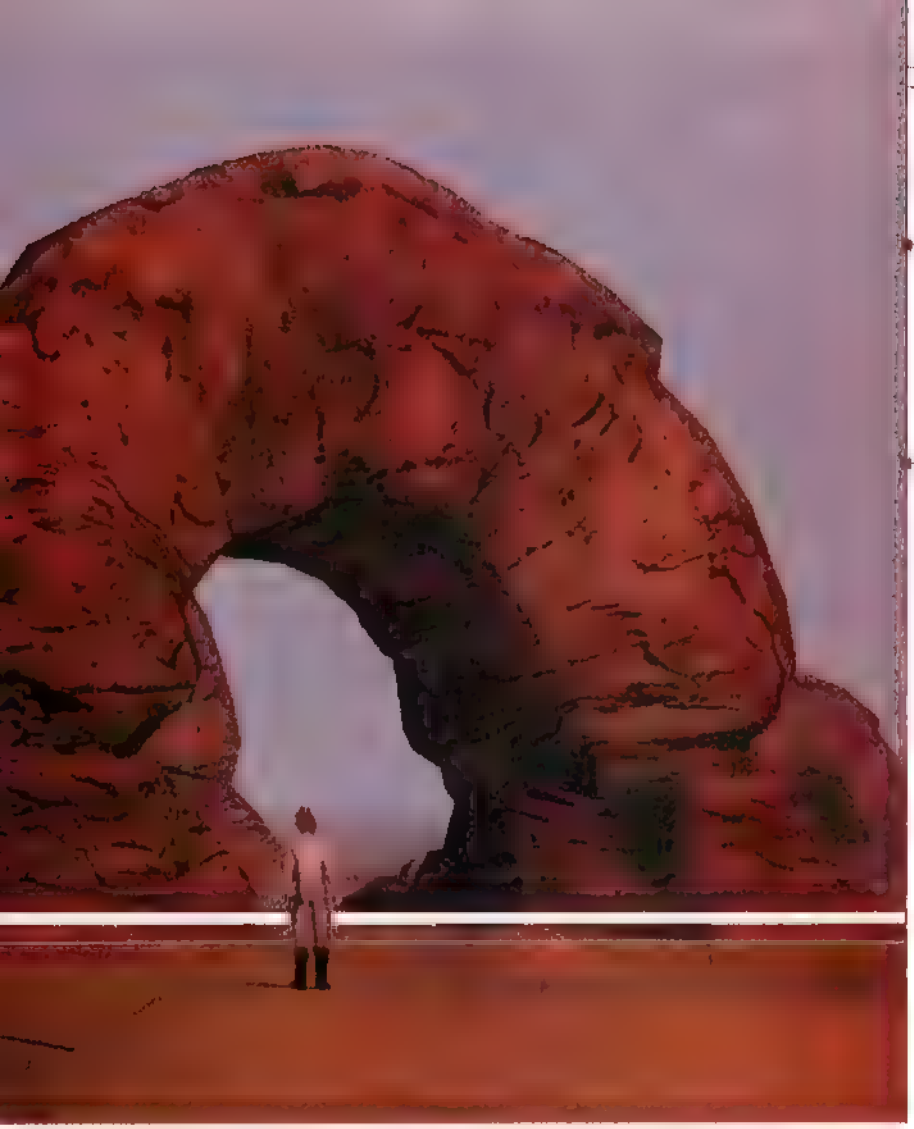


STAR WARS

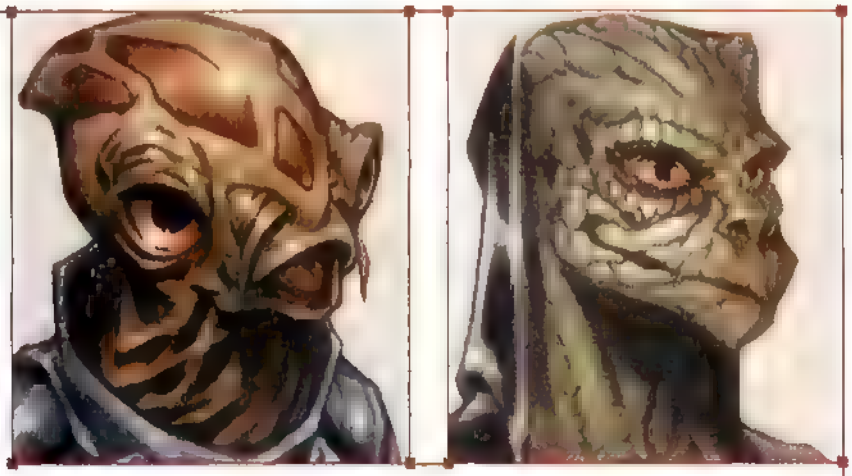
***Attack of the Clones* doesn't nearly describe the unique vision for this galactic game** By Thierry Nguyen



PLAYING WITH *STAR WARS* TOYS USED TO BE THE ONLY WAY TO IMMERSE YOURSELF IN THE *STAR WARS* UNIVERSE. NOT ANYMORE.

"Let's just make *EverQuest* in space." ■ ■ ■ That was the first thing the developers of *Star Wars Galaxies* made sure *not* to have as a design goal. So don't expect to camp at an Ewok spawn point and yell incessantly for SOWs and buffs. *Star Wars Galaxies* isn't just going to be a Monty Haul-style fight-and-loot game with a chat window stapled on top like, say, *EQ*, *Dark Age of Camelot*, *Asheron's Call*, *Anarchy Online*. It's going to offer a giant, virtual society. With *Star Wars* trappings. ■ ■ ■ Think of something you'd like to do, and odds are you can probably do it. Do you want to run a seedy tavern in Mos Eisley? Do you want to zip around the landscapes of Naboo in

GALAXIES



pursuit of a bounty? Do you want to take a group of friends out rancor hunting, and then maybe relax at Jabba's Palace afterwards? ■ ■ ■ The developers at Sony Online Entertainment in Austin let me in their doors to see everything there is to see about SWG (with the exception of death). I was able to get info on the new planet, character generation, the interface, the static hit point system, and the process of becoming a Jedi. But here's how I'd sum it up: This game is going to be absolutely huge.

Becoming a Jedi is the ultimate goal, and consequently will be the hardest role in the game to achieve. In the movies there are at most four Jedi running around (Luke, Vader, Yoda, and the Emperor), so the process of becoming a Jedi in *SWG* is a guarded secret. The only hints I'll give are that everyone has the chance to be a Jedi, and everyone's chances are equal. A novice player who's a cook has the same chance at Jedi-hood as a veteran player who's become a badass bounty hunter. The process is individualized for each player, so you can't become a Jedi and post the solution online. Apprenticeship is important. Don't think life is easy, though: As one of the few Jedi in the game, you'll be hunted for the rest of your life by the likes of Vader (as shown here).

I Wanna Be a Wookiee!

How will you join the galaxy? Lead system designer Anthony Castoro said they're still bouncing ideas around, but they're working on a customs metaphor in which "you start the game seeing an Imperial Customs officer." The officer will ask you for your name and race, and that's where you can tweak your appearance. The facial customization process is extremely detailed. For noses alone, you can manipulate a series of sliders to customize bridge length, nostril flare, and so forth. Different species have different attributes to customize. Mon Calamari can adjust eye spacing and gullet size, Rodians can change snout length and antennae size, and Wookiees can fiddle with the patches of fur that cover their bodies.

The officer will then ask what your profession is. Novice players can choose from basic templates (roles like farmer, soldier, or dancer), which automatically allocate the required starting skills. If you're a more advanced player, you can skip these templates and allocate skill points yourself. Actual profession names are still being finalized, but expect options ranging from smuggler to chef.

After you've designed your character, the officer will ask which planet you want to go to, and you'll board a shuttle that jets you off into the newbie area. As of press time, the announced planets are Tattoome, Naboo, Corellia (Han Solo's home planet), Talus (a sister planet to Corellia), Forest Moon of Endor, Yavin 4, and Dathomir (see sidebar on page 69).

Control, You Must Learn Control!

In terms of interface, Sony Online has learned its lessons from *EverQuest*—so expect something much easier and friendlier in *Star Wars Galaxies*. (Remember accidentally attacking NPC guards because you hit A in *EQ*?) All commands are delivered via the mouse or the F-keys. The mouse controls both a targeting reticle (your primary tool) and the camera, and the mouse wheel easily takes you between first- and third-person views. You generally just need to hold down the left mouse button to see a menu of options, such as initiate combat, talk with, examine, or trade.

In fact, doing everything with the mouse and F-keys leaves the keyboard free to be used mostly for socializing. Raph Koster, creative director, even eliminated the Enter key hurdle, so you'll just start typing to talk. "I figure that people play these games to chat or kill things," he said, "so we removed that small but annoying obstacle." Character dialogue is displayed in chat bubbles as well as in the chat box, a la *Ultima Online* or *Phantasy Star Online*. Additionally, you can set a mood (such as "/happy") and your character will always have a certain expression.

■ continued on page 68

RELEASE DATE: Q4 2002 PUBLISHER: LucasArts DEVELOPER: Sony Online GENRE: Massively multiplayer CONTACT: www.starwarsgalaxies.station.sony.com

Pieces of the Death Star fell to Yavin. Burnt, pockmarked, and full of litter, this place is worth seeing. Give a hoot, Empire.

SCORCHED EARTH: A CHANGE OF SCENERY

The fractal-based terrain engine is what drives the planets, allowing them to have massive mountains, lush trees, and weird crystal things all over the place. Additionally, points-of-interest pop on occasion; they range from hard-coded locations (such as the scorched area of Yavin 4 shown here) to dynamically generated spawn points. Outside of the newbie area and the important locations (Fort Tusken or Scorched Yavin), monsters spawn based on where you are, not where a world designer says they will be. This should eliminate camping, as there's no longer a hot spot to sit for critters, which will hopefully translate into varied and interesting gameworlds.

SWG sets out to create a virtual society. The player-driven economy is just one facet of this vision.

■ continued from page 66

whether you're chatting or showing a social move (like "/dance"). These visual options are key for races like Wookiee, who can't learn Basic, the common language of the galaxy, and must rely on gestures to convey emotion.

The heads-up display is standard fare, featuring a chat box, a radar/map in the lower-left corner, and a datapad on the lower right that shows features like inventory, mission log, and so forth. All of these windows are movable and transparent, and you can expand the chatbox or reduce it to a single line.

Not Just Player-Versus-Player, but Player-With-Player

More than any other game, *SWG* sets out to create a virtual society. The player-driven economy is just one facet of this vision.

The player crafting process is completely new—you're not just a lone blacksmith banging repeatedly on components, you are now one cog in an economic wheel. Players can be designers, miners, manufacturers, transporters, and merchants. One player designs a rifle and sends the schematics to a manufacturer, who gets another player to mine resources for creating the item and then sends the finished rifles to a merchant to stock in her store. All the while, there will be courier players moving everything around. You can't do it all yourself: If you choose to be an advanced droid manufacturer, you need to get your designs and components from other players.

Why take part in this chain? If the team's plan comes together, player-crafted items will be of much better quality than anything you can get as either a random item drop from an NPC or from an NPC merchant. Each item will have a label that specifies who designed it, so players can get a bit of a rep for making quality guns, droids, or what-have-you.

In fact, crafting has undergone another change: You don't increase your skill by churning out items. Rather, your character improves the more people use your items. If you make a rifle, sell it to someone, and log off, you can log back on and get an experience-point dump based on how often your customer shot things. "It's results oriented," commented Koster.

The player-driven economy is just one area in which the developers are working to "drive player community formation," as Koster put it. There is such an emphasis on community that the design calls for NPCs to be almost irrelevant. Not only will players drive the economy, they'll also drive missions, which can range from acting as a courier for goods to being someone's bodyguard.

An interesting addition to the mission structure is the bond. Most missions are given by other players, but what would prevent someone from saying, "Sure, I'll bring this design schematic from Tattooine to your friend in Yavin..." and then pocketing the item? Mission creators thus will have the option of issuing a bond; players accepting missions put their money up as the bond, and will get the bond back only when they have successfully completed the mission. If they fail, not only do players lose the bond money, but the bond money then becomes a bounty fee, and a bounty-hunter player can accept the mission and receive the failed bond as a reward. Bounty missions are distributed randomly, so you can't scheme with your friends to purposely fail a mission, have a large bounty posted on you, let your friend take you down, and split the loot.

■ continued on page 70

MASTER BLASTER: GUN MODS

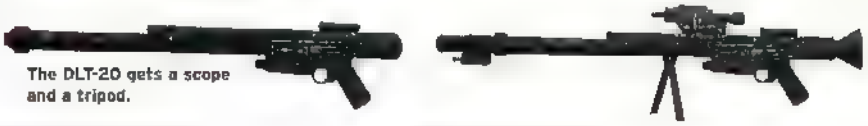
Weapon modifications basically boil down to improvements in range, accuracy, rate-of-fire, and damage. Here are some examples.

The DL-44 blaster and Han Solo's famous tricked-out version, which has a larger barrel and a scope, making for accuracy and range bonus.

BEFORE AFTER

The DH-17 rifle, the stock rifle for the Rebels. The modified version has a new scope and a barrel.

The E-11 Stormtrooper blaster, shown right with modified stock and scope.



The DLT-20 gets a scope and a tripod.

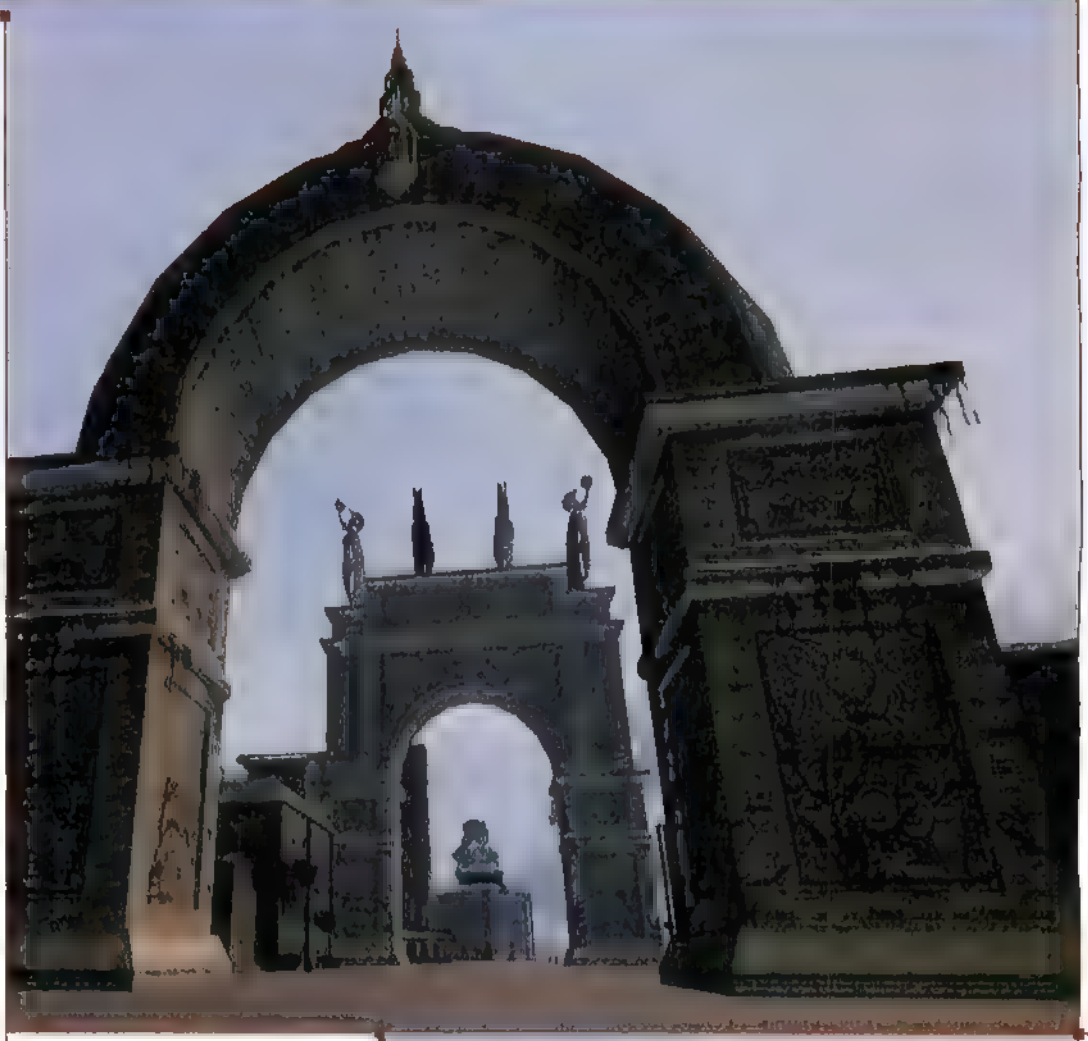
WILD, WILD RANCOR WORLD! DATHOMIR

Not only did we get all of this info on the game, but the development team decided to let us announce a whole new planet, Dathomir. Hardcore fans might know about this witch-filled planet, but for the rest of us, here's the lowdown straight from Haden Blackman:

"It's a low-gravity world inhabited by the Witches of Dathomir, a group of Force-sensitive women who ride fearsome rancors. The planet is covered with many kinds of terrain, including mountains, deserts, purple savannas, and forests of 80-meter trees. Humans came to Dathomir when a group of illegal arms manufacturers were exiled to the planet by the Jedi knights. Several generations later, a rogue Jedi named Allya was also exiled to Dathomir. She began to teach the Force to the planet's inhabitants and her descendants, who also learned to tame the wild rancors. Nearly 400 years before the Battle of Yavin, the 2-kilometer Jedi academy ship Chu'unthor crashed in a Dathomir tar pit. Jedi sent to recover the crashed ship were repelled by the witches. Different clans of these witches (Singing Mountain, Frenzied River, Misty Falls) were formed, including a group of Dark Siders calling itself the Night-sisters. Life among the clans follows a pattern of female dominance, and males are largely used as slaves for work or breeding. The planet also has an Imperial penal colony."

CONCEPT ART

THEED: A CITY OF CITIES



Theed is a great example of the absolutely mad ideas and level of detail that the designers are putting into *SWG*. For example, see these archways? They're something on the level of 250 feet high. On top rest intricately detailed statues with reflective spheres and everything else glittery and showy. But there are no jetpacks in *SWG*, so you can't actually go up there to admire the scenery. Theed itself is huge; we saw only a fraction of it in *The Phantom Menace*, and just the walk from this first archway to the palace is a bit of a hike. You can even walk to the very same waterfall that Qui-Gon, Obi-Wan, and Jar-Jar surfaced at, and, if you're feeling suicidal, take the plunge.

■ continued from page 68

Mad Jedi Skillz

Even skill advancement is player driven: Acquiring some of the most advanced skills in the game requires working with other players. Koster said, "The most advanced skills in a game will not be taught by any NPC; players will have to have form a city, build a guild dedicated to a certain profession, and only then will those skills be teachable." Castoro added, "Skill advancement is capped and is controlled by whether or not players form a city and then put down the necessary guild." Skill advancement via player cooperation also happens on a more personal level, as Castoro explained: "Advanced players who want to access their high-level skills are required to teach new players. If you were a novice marksman, expert marksmen now have a reason to come along, give you tips, help you shoot things, and help you level faster." Koster interjected, "We're basically institutionalizing twinking."

The game is skills based and doesn't even really have leveling. Instead of being a Level 4 scout, you're a veteran or master scout. The emphasis on skills

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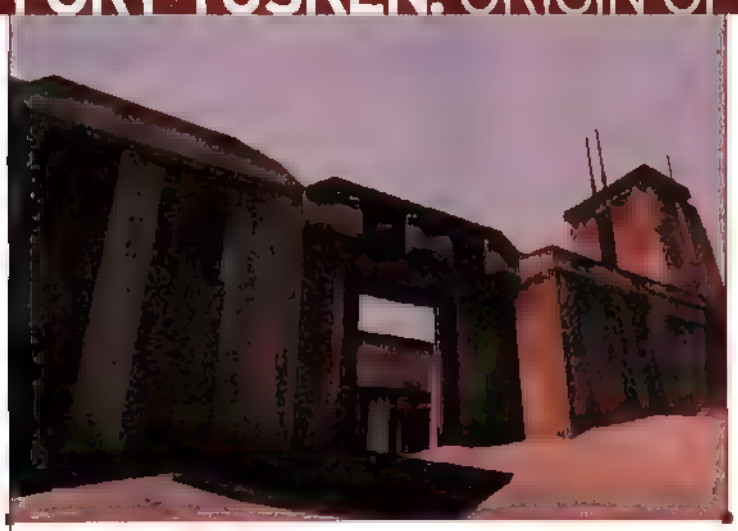
FORT TUSKEN: ORIGIN OF A NAME



Yes, the masked dorks that attacked Luke in *A New Hope*, only to be beaten back by crafty ol' Kenobi, were called "sand people." But that's the slang term; their official designation is "Tusken Raiders." If you've been wondering about the discrepancy, know that "Tusken" refers to a mining colony that these guys raided and overcame. The fort remains a static point-of-interest and isn't much more than a ghost town. If you are creeped out by the idea of roaming around an abandoned, ransacked base alone, be consoled by the thought that you can probably still find a few sand dorks to kill there.

RACES AND FACES: ANIFC ONE WARS

The multilayered clothing can be modified by fashion-designer players, and the facial and body customization features outperform those in any other game seen to date. For example, this is perhaps the first game to include the option of making fat characters, so you're not locked into the stereotypical svelte or buff superhero physique. Interestingly, the Bothans (pictured above, right) were the hardest to create a facial template for, mostly due to the fact that they've had no movie appearances (they got a throwaway line in *Return of the Jedi*) and there were no official visual references (inconsistent comic artists). The art team went back and forth with Lucas Licensing before finally getting these faces approved. *Star Wars Galaxies* now has the official Bothan face.

■ continued from page 70

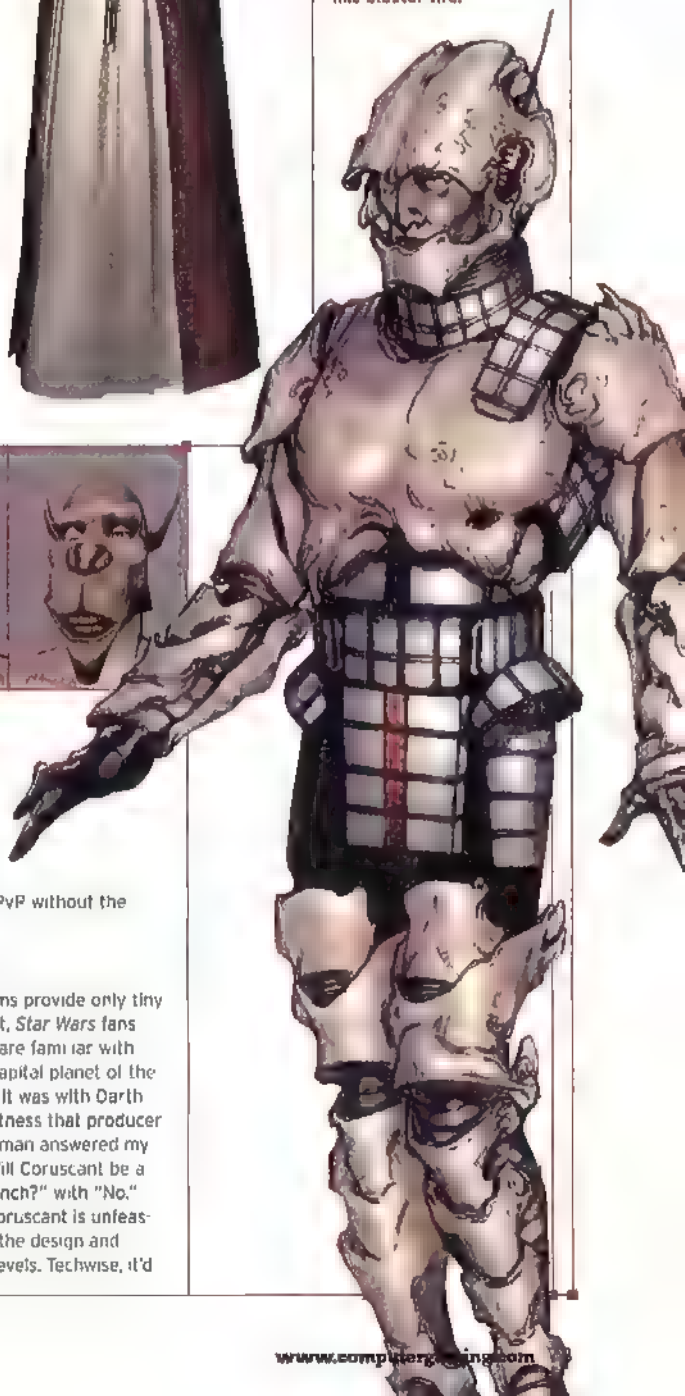
rather than levels further embodies the social dynamic behind the game. Koster also laid an interesting MMO-design bomb on me: "Your stats and hit points don't go up." The health, mind, and body stats (i.e., hit points, mana, and stamina) won't increase at all, only your skills will. Castoro elaborated, "When I have higher-level skills, I'm still going to be better than you. But since I have the same amount of hit points, it hurts me just as much as it hurts you when a monster hits one of us." Koster concluded, "The master who has mastered just about every skill he can get and the novice who happens to have the one skill the master doesn't have can group together. Also, you don't have to worry about being five levels above your friend and not being able to group together; anyone can basically group with anyone else."

The skills system answers questions like how a dancer can be useful in gameplay or whether there are spell casters in *SWG*. Gamers who play as dancers or musicians get to fulfill their weird role-playing fetish, and their skills help combat-focused players recover health/body/mind points faster. Right after a big battle, you will actually want to pay to see a good Twi'Lek dancer. And since Jedi are the only magicians in *Star Wars*, there are viable explanations for buffs (leadership/survival skills) and nukes (a combination of ranged combat and certain types of blasters) for gamers who like playing spell casters but can't figure out how to become Jedi.

Die, Rebel Scum

The game takes place after *A New Hope* and before *The Empire Strikes Back*, so the Galactic Civil War is still in full swing, which is where factions and player-versus-player come into play. Koster describes the battlefield, which is a trial PvP area. For example, an Imperial outpost could spawn in Tatooine, which creates a boundary. When you cross this boundary, you're asked, "Which side of the war are you on?" Koster described the area as a "miniature version of

BONE ARMOR
Bone armor does indeed come from the bones of slain creatures. A certain species created armor from bones and leather; when the Empire built an installation on this planet, this species incorporated metal into their armor. Bone armor is light and good for physical attacks but not so effective against energy attacks like blaster fire.



Counter-Strike," where players of two factions compete in the area. If you die within the boundary, you spawn outside of it and are no longer allowed in. Whichever side wins gains control of the area, which mostly translates to either stormtroopers or rebel NPCs patrolling the area. So you get a taste for the PvP war aspect of the game without much detrimental effect to you.

PvP comes into play after you declare yourself aligned with the Rebellion, Imperial, or Hutt factions. Once you've declared, you're allowed to kill players who have allied themselves with the opposing factions, and you gain access to certain missions and items. Player Associations (the *SWG* version of guilds) that have declared have the option to build structures (bases for Imperials or Rebels, hideouts for the Hutts), which can act as safehouses and even spawn friendly NPCs.

"[Another] place for PvP is a wild area, which is not a free-for-all like Dark Tide in *Asheron's Call* or a red server on *EQ*," said Koster. You can attack anyone you want in a wild area, but your victim can report you, which may result in your PvP rights being suspended. Now, if you are role playing some evil alien who kills for fun, then your victim might not feel like reporting you. If you are reported, however, you have to seek forgiveness from either your victim or from a player town. With the wild areas and the battlefields, the development team hopes that players get the feel for PvP without the hassles.

Coruscant

While the films provide only tiny glimpses of it, *Star Wars* fans and gamers are familiar with Coruscant, capital planet of the Empire. And it was with Darth Maulian swiftness that producer Haden Blackman answered my question, "Will Coruscant be a planet at launch?" with "No."

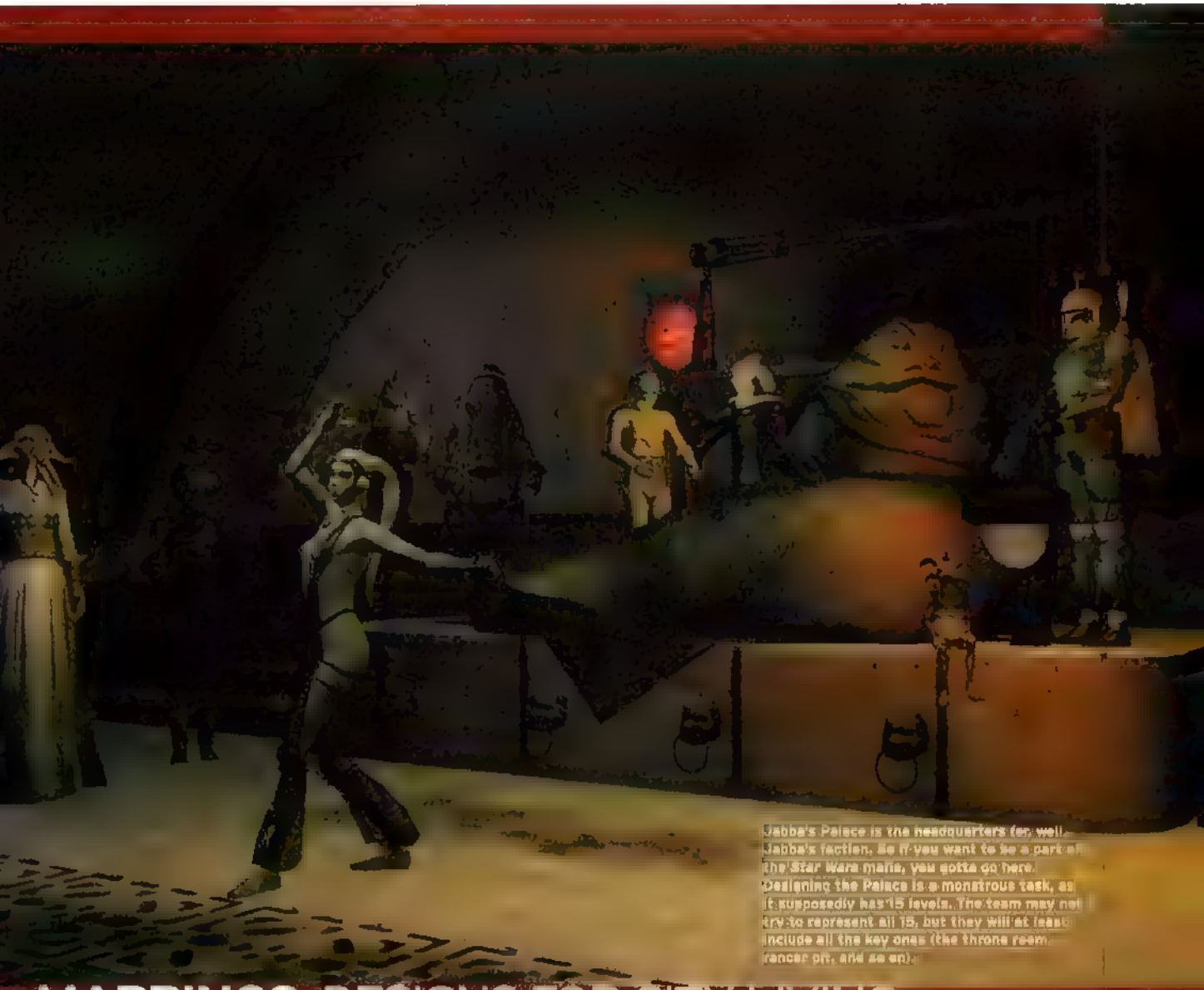
For now, Coruscant is unfeasible on both the design and technology levels. Techwise, it'd

TATTOOINE: JABBA INC.

Tattooine will have places like Mos Eisley, Mos Espa, and yes, Anchorhead (where Luke wanted to grab some power converters at the Tosche station in *A New Hope*). Heck, even Jabba's Palace is its own town (see next page). Players can create their own cities and make an even scummier and villainous hive for criminals to flock to.

take an insane amount of computer horsepower to generate all of the buildings and vehicles required to render it accurately. Designwise, each planet needs a compelling reason for players to want to run around it—and having the capital of the Empire in the game effectively shuts out anyone who isn't aligned with them: "It wouldn't be fun to have a whole planet that will shoot any non-Imperial on sight." Finally, most people really just want to fly around and gawk at scenery. It's too much work for too little gain, so the team decided not to include Coruscant in the game.

All this amounts to only a fraction of what I saw. Listening to Koster and his team talk is listening to guys who know MMO design strutting their stuff. To let slip a bit of hyperbole, this is one of the most epic games I've seen in development, and we'll see if the Force was with the team when the game finally gets released. ■■■



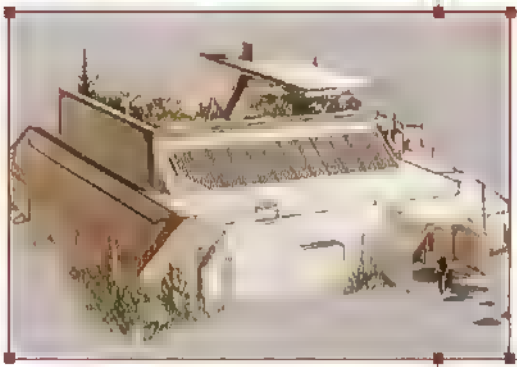
Jabba's Palace is the headquarters for, well, Jabba's faction. So if you want to be a part of the Star Wars mania, you gotta go here. Designing the Palace is a monstrous task, as it supposedly has 15 levels. The team may not try to represent all 15, but they will at least include all the key ones (the throne room, rancor pit, and so on).

MAPPINGS: DESIGNS FOR CITY LIVING

Not only does the engine render alien landscapes, it also does a fair job of creating believable cities. Most of the original trilogy featured small towns and installations, so lead world designer Cinco Barnes and his team had a clean slate when it came to designing cities; they were given descriptions from official continuity sources (RPG sourcebooks or novels) but not much else.

All new layouts that Barnes and his team create (for example, cities on Corellia) will be considered official in the eyes of Lucas Licensing. In short, they are the official mapmakers for several of these planets and cities.

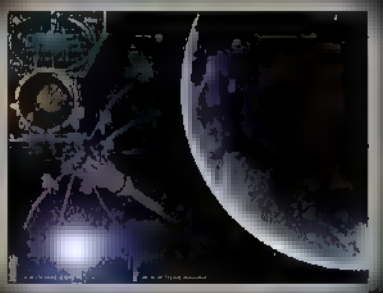
Executive Producer Rich Vogel and Barnes cited theme parks as a major influence in designing the various cities in the game. When it came to urban planning, they followed the Disney model of scattering landmarks all over the place, making the city easy to navigate. So you can go to any planet, and even if you've never been there before, you'll easily find the hotel, the shops, the bars—all of the standard locations.



Next time you're walking around the Magic Kingdom, think about its influence on the design of Theed on Naboo.

PROJECT EARTH

WHEN HUMAN EMOTIONS MIX WITH EXPLODING PLANETS...



Complete freedom of camera movement to watch the action from any angle.

Engaging Real Time Strategy in a beautifully rendered 3D real-time environment

Advanced 3D engine with real-time particles and space physics.

TEEN

CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

PC CD ROM

TEEN
Mild Language
Mild Violence

Lemon

DREAMCATCHER

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Reviews

We love games, we hate games Edited by Robert Coffey

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93 DESTROYER COMMAND

Ghost Recon: Desert Siege

How Do We Rate?

We review only finished games—no betas, no patches

EDITORS' CHOICE

OUTSTANDING The rare game that gets it all right. A must-play experience.

VERY GOOD Worthy of your time and money, but there are drawbacks.

AVERAGE Either an ambitious design with major flaws, or just vanilla.

WEAK Seriously lacking in play value, poorly conceived, or just another clone.

ABYSMAL The rare game that gets it all wrong. Pathetic. Coaster material.

Lightsaber battles are the highlight of the game. That's Luke Skywalker in black, by the way, fighting right alongside you.

Jedi Knight II: Jedi Outcast

How do you follow a classic *Star Wars* game? Make a better one **By Jeff Green**

PUBLISHER LucasArts
DEVELOPER Raven GENRE FPS
URL www.lucasarts.com
ESRB RATING Teen; violence
PRICE $49.95

REQUIREMENTS Pentium II 350, 64MB RAM (128MB for Windows 2000/XP), 665MB hard drive space, 16MB 3D card RECOMMENDED REQUIREMENTS Pentium III 500, 128MB RAM, 32MB 3D card MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT LAN, Internet (2-32 players)

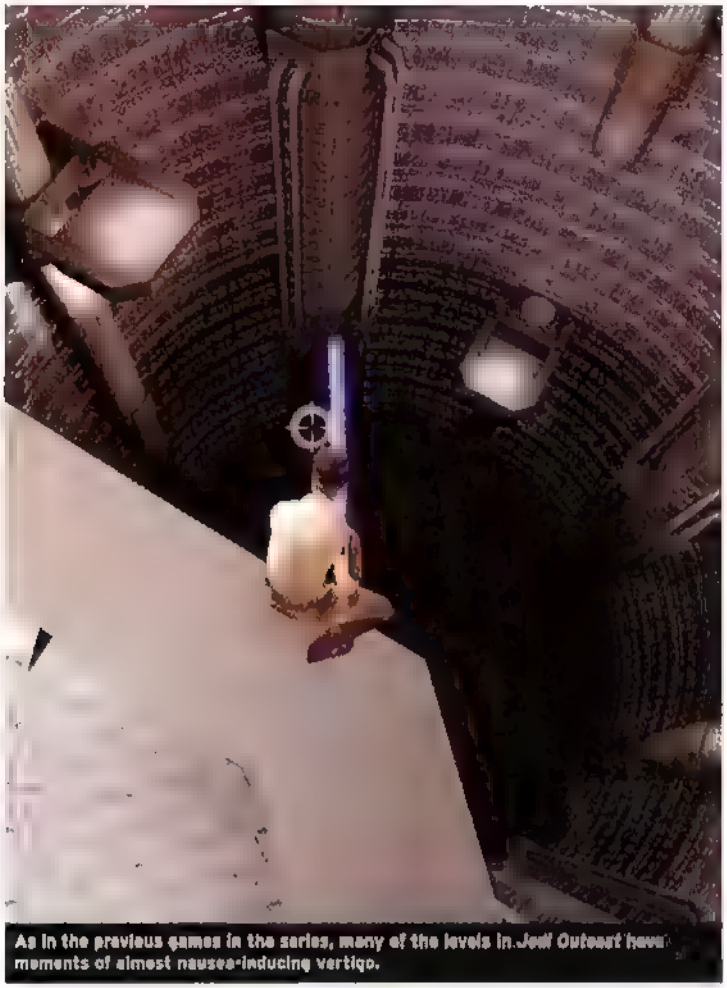
Twenty-five years after the first movie turned ordinary kids into Dorks for Life, LucasArts' *Star Wars* empire continues to rule the pop culture galaxy. It hasn't always been great, or, at times, even tolerable (hi Jar-Jar!), but when LucasArts nails that magic combination of mythology, space opera, and pulp adventure, *Star Wars* is as great as popular entertainment gets. And *Jedi Knight II: Jedi Outcast*, the highly anticipated sequel to the 1997 action game, is a *Star Wars* game that works. It works beautifully.

Set nine years after *Jedi Knight*, *Jedi Outcast* again puts you in the role of Kyle Katarn, a Han Solo-ish guy who, as a Jedi in the previous game, nearly succumbed to the dark side of the Force. Kyle has since forsaken his role as a Jedi knight, giving up his Force powers and handing over his lightsaber to some guy named Luke Skywalker. As the game opens, Kyle and his partner, the fetching Jan Ors, are sent on a supposedly routine mission for the New Republic to check out a remote planet where Imperial transmissions have been intercepted. Of course, things get very complicated very fast, and Kyle must once again take on the Empire—and confront his powers as a Jedi knight.

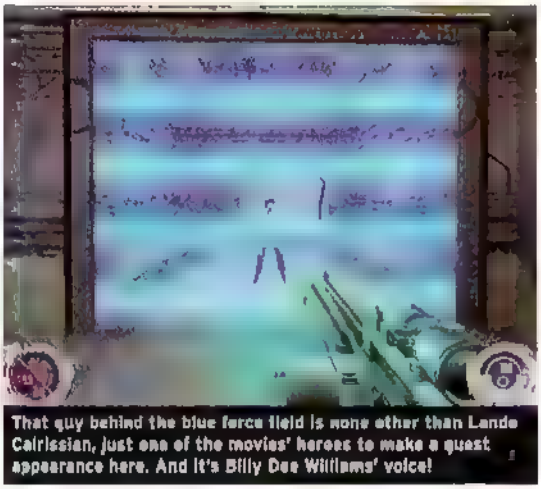
It's a compelling story, well told. The game's developers, Raven Software, also made *Star Trek: Elite Force*, and as they showed in that title, they have an innate gift for combining the right elements of a popular franchise with solid, entertaining gameplay and level design. The result is the best PC *Star Wars* game in years.

Built on the *Quake III: Team Arena* engine, *Jedi Outcast* takes place in a series of huge, engaging levels (many of them outdoors) that combine run-and-gun action with simple puzzle solving. Most of the puzzles are the standard (and at times, annoying) jumping and reflex puzzles, but there are a few logic and mind puzzles along the way to mix things up—though nothing too tough for anyone who can read these words. I got seriously held up only twice, both times from being unable to find unforgivably hard-to-locate holes I was supposed to crawl through. (If you find the one on Yavin 4 right away, you're smarter than me.) Pay careful attention to your surroundings and inspect *everything*, especially if you want to find the game's numerous secret areas.

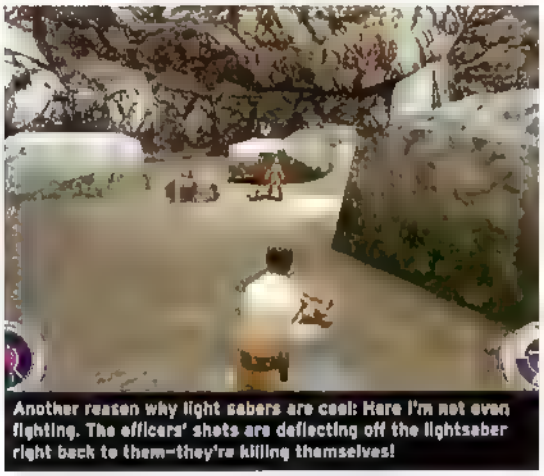
Lightsaber locks are beautifully rendered, with sparks flying and duelists struggling to overpower each other.



As in the previous games in the series, many of the levels in *Jedi Outcast* have moments of almost nausea-inducing vertigo.



That guy behind the blue force field is none other than Lando Calrissian, just one of the movies' heroes to make a guest appearance here. And it's Billy Dee Williams' voice!



Another reason why light sabers are cool: Here I'm not even fighting. The officers' shots are deflecting off the lightsaber right back to them—they're killing themselves!

MULTIPLAYER JEDI

Jedi Outcast's multiplayer is the equal of the single-player game, with multiple modes and rules and stunning bot AI to round out your matches. As in the single-player game, the lightsaber is the best weapon, though you sissies out there may favor the disrupter rifle's sniper scope.

Jedi Outcast works as both a great game and a great story—that rarely happens in gaming.

Like all post-*Half-Life* shooters, *Jedi Outcast* is full of scripted events and dialogue, which are used to great effect here: Not overdone, silly, or distracting, they're just enough to make the world feel alive. Making it even more so are the enemy movement and AI, which constantly keep you on your toes. Stormtroopers and other foes will duck, evade, and attempt to flank you, and although they won't open closed doors if you leave a room, they'll be waiting for you, guns poised, when you go back in. Enemy death and injury animations are a joy: Bad guys clutch their neck, gut, or other body parts, they twist and spin in the air. And if they're unlucky enough to meet your lightsaber, they can get their limbs sliced straight off. That's what they get for joining the stupid Empire.

Much more than the previous two games, *Jedi Outcast* focuses on the Jedi powers instead of on gunplay—it's not just *Quake* in space. As you progress through the levels, you get a series of exceedingly effective Force powers (sans point allocation), beautifully rendered but, more important, incredibly powerful and useful in gameplay. Running a gauntlet through a canyon on Yavin 4, I was able to Force Pull stormtroopers off high cliffs to crash to their deaths without ever lifting a weapon. Many of the puzzles require the use of Force powers, including the Jedi Mind Trick and Force Speed, which does the *Max Payne* bullet time effect one better. As in *Jedi Knight*, the lightsaber is easily the best weapon—as it should be—and is the only way to defeat other lightsaber-wielding foes.

I loved *Jedi Outcast* because it works as both a great game and a great story—something that rarely happens in gaming. Even the title is clever, referring to both the story's hero and villain. And Kyle Katarn is more than your standard wisecracking, muscle-bound hero—he's a flawed character with history. A shocking plot twist about a quarter of the way in gives Kyle the motivation to seek out his Force powers again, and the sequence—complete with John Williams' classic music—has real emotional resonance.

But besides that, it's just beautifully designed: fast paced, challenging, and awesome to look at. It's an early competitor for Action Game of the Year. We can only hope that *Attack of the Clones* is half as good.

VERDICT ★★★★★

An engaging storyline, great level design, and awesome lightsaber battles and Force powers make *Jedi Outcast* the equal, if not the better, of previous *Jedi Knight* games.

All the action in *Freedom Force* perfectly captures the epic look and feel of Silver Age comics.

Freedom Force

Finally, the comic book game we've been dying for **By Robert Coffey**

PUBLISHER Irrational Games
DEVELOPER EA GENRE RPG /strategy URL www.myfreedomforce.com ESRB RATING Teen; violence PRICE $39.95

REQUIREMENTS Pentium II 300, 64MB RAM, 680MB hard drive space RECOMMENDED REQUIREMENTS Pentium III 600, 128MB RAM, 770MB hard drive space MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT Internet, LAN (2-4 players)

I have one huge problem with *Freedom Force*: I don't have any notes. Every time I sat down to play it for this review, I got completely lost in the game, totally involved in the deceptively deep tactical combat, engrossed in the delicate juggling of RPG character development, and utterly swept up in the giddy, overwhelming sense of fun that permeates every 1 and 0 burned onto the game CD. So here I am, one week later, with a scrap of notepaper reading "This is too much fun" and a reminder to myself to "Save up for Hellfire." That is some kind of incredible professional game assessment. No wonder I'm paid in single-serving boxes of Cocoa Puffs.

On its surface, *Freedom Force* is a tactical strategy game in the *X-COM* mold, with gamers commanding a team of up to four comic book-style superheroes. Prestige points earned by protecting *Freedom Force*'s hometown of Patriot City from aliens, dinosaurs, giant robots, and a seemingly endless army of twisted supervillains are used to recruit new team members, including those you create yourself. Likewise, every character on your team gains experience after each mission, with team members who actually perform the missions getting the lion's share. Characters that level up get character points for purchasing new general abilities or for buying and upgrading their specific powers. One or two of your characters will level up after almost every mission, so you'll constantly be asking yourself questions like "Do I save up my points to get Flying for Man-Bot next time he levels up, or should I upgrade his Wallop and get Double Uppercut while I'm at it?"

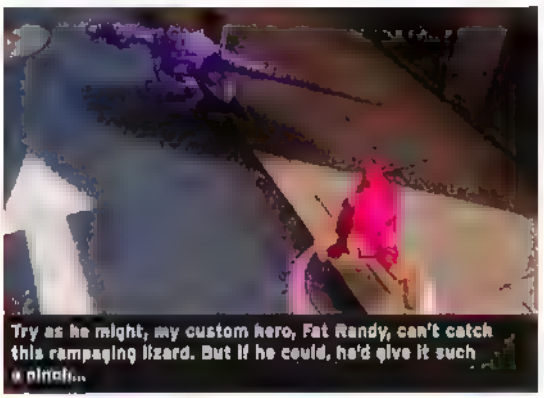
Team Play

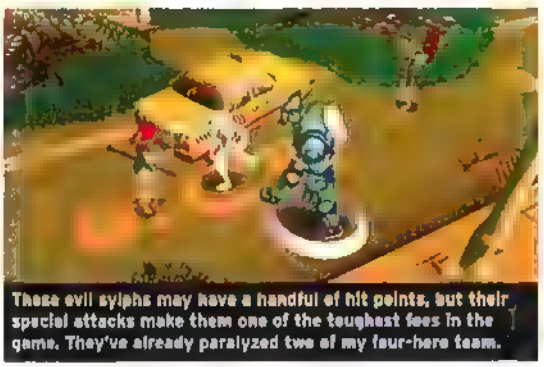
The RPG elements offer a deeper, more personal level of strategy in a game that at first glance might seem a bit short on the tactical strategy it promises. After all, superpowered do-gooders should be able to handle almost anything, right? But *Freedom Force* understands that the appeal of any great superhero team and the appeal of any great strategy game are the same: a clever balance of individual strengths and weaknesses. While you might succeed at first by leaning on the superstrength of team leader Minuteman, you'll need the incredible speed of Bullet when you infiltrate Mr. Mechanical's secret lab, you'll need the ranged attacks of the fiery El Diablo and stalwart Man-Bot to defeat the evil sylphs of Pan, and you'll even need the Schoolyard Taunts of Minuteman's teen sidekick Liberty Lad to make it through the rough-and-tumble street brawls versus Déjà Vu's nasty clones. Mission design is open enough that you'll want to replay with different characters just to see what happens. You can create teams to battle other gamers

Master of the deep Man O' War dodges one alien's attack while trying to ensnare its comrade with a Bermuda Triangle net.

The mystical southern belle college student Alchamist closes a portal to stop an alien invasion.

Minuteman is sent reeling by a blow from one of Mr. Mechanical's diabolical robots.


Try as he might, my custom hero, Fat Randy, can't catch this rampaging lizard. But if he could, he'd give it such a pinch...


These evil sylphs may have a handful of hit points, but their special attacks make them one of the toughest foes in the game. They've already paralyzed two of my four-hero team.

in multiplayer, but this is primarily a single-player game.

As much as it succeeds as a game, *Freedom Force* is also a loving tribute to Silver Age comics. Every team member has a wry, animated secret-origin sequence explaining how a chance encounter with Energy X turned him or her into a superbeing. Buildings tumble during battles, and you can club enemies with streetlights or throw cars at them. Cut scenes recreate the classic in fighting, flirting, and internal struggles depicted in Justice League of America. You've got sound effect balloons, ridiculously garish but perfect costumes, time travel, cosmic battles for the fate of mankind, overly dramatic descriptions of every person and object in the game (a building is a "proud participant in the Patriot City skyline," a T-rex the "regal king of the tyrant lizards"), and much, much more. If you've seen it in a comic, you'll see it in *Freedom Force*.

What About the Bad Guys?

Well, almost everything. If there's one big oversight in the game, it's the lack of any background info on the supervillains. As well as the developers understand comics, they seem to have forgotten that the Joker's origin is just as crucial as Batman's. So although you have the requisite tragic villainess, the superpowered gangster, the insane rhyming trickster, and more, you never know how they got that way.

That's about the only shortcoming in the game. I did run into one bug that caused a team member to not respond to my commands, and I had to restart a mission when enemies that could be interrogated only by the nonflying Eve wound up on unreachable rooftops. That didn't come close to impinging on my enjoyment. Just like a great comic, *Freedom Force* left me thirsting for more. With luck, we'll see an expansion pack later this year and the next installment of the planned trilogy in 2003.

Until then, I'll be playing through the game once more before slipping the CD and manual into a protective mylar bag complete with an acid-free backing board.

VERDICT ★★★★★

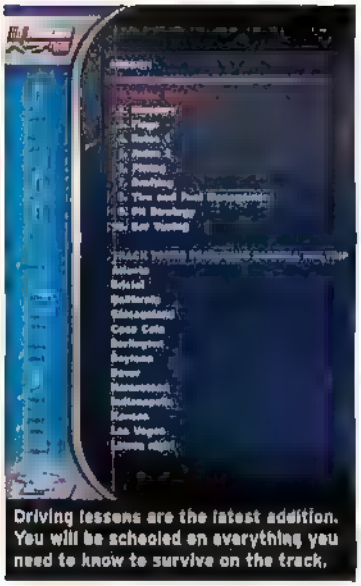
The most pure fun you'll have with a strategy or RPG game this year. 'Nuff said.

COSTUMES 'R' US

So where are the best places to get new skins for your own personal Superfriends? *Freedom Force* producer Ken Levine recommends two sites: www.darkjared.addr.com/ff/ffmain.htm and www.freedomforcecenter.com. Both of these sites had literally hundreds of skins available prior to the game's release, covering virtually every major Marvel and DC character, with multiple versions of heavy hitters like Batman. Comic geeks are going to have a field day putting together their ultimate dream team.

While we were relieved to see no Power Pack members on either site, we had to wonder: Where are the Watchmen? Where are the Mystery Men? Where are the cult favorites? We will not be assuaged by the Jan Brady and David Letterman skins. Until we can put Rorschach, Mr. Furious, and Too Much Coffee Man into one *really* angry, jittery team, we at *CGW* will not know peace.

The new Track Tours show you the braking and acceleration points and provide a line of arrows that point the best way around all the tracks on the NASCAR circuit.



Driving lessons are the latest addition. You will be schooled on everything you need to know to survive on the track.

NASCAR Racing 2002 Season

The NASCAR school of driving is now in session By Wade Hermes

PUBLISHER Sierra
DEVELOPER Papyrus
GENRE Driving sim
URL www.sierra.com
ESRB RATING Everyone
PRICE $49.99

REQUIREMENTS Pentium III 450, 64MB RAM, 16MB Direct3D-compatible video card, 8X CD-ROM drive
RECOMMENDED REQUIREMENTS Pentium 4, 128MB RAM, GeForce3 video card
MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT Internet, LAN (2-43 players)

The *NASCAR Racing* series has always been the choice for gamers who want the most realistic, hardcore simulation of rough-and-tumble stock-car racing. But for those less dedicated, these titles have been too difficult to drive, and the time it took to learn how to finish a race (let alone win one) was just too daunting. *NASCAR 2002* provides new and unique features that bridge the gap between the fanatical, hardcore sim racer and the casual gamer.

Still included are the familiar test session, single-race, championship, and multiplayer modes from the previous titles; it's the addition of new driving lessons that separates this release from its predecessors. These lessons consist of replays of actual in-game races to demonstrate the subjects being taught. You get detailed visual instructions covering everything from drafting to performing a perfect pit stop. There are tips on making adjustments in the garage as well, so if you're not a wrench head, you need not worry. After you've finished all of the lessons, it's time to try the Track Tours. Here three-time Winston Cup champion Darrell Waltrip explains the preferred line around each and every track. His explanation is accompanied by green arrows that actually show you the best way around.

Papyrus has tweaked some of the features to maintain realism while making the cars easier to drive. The damage model and tire traction have been redone to reflect more realistically the way cars handle when damaged, as well as to allow for better side-by-side two-wide racing. The sounds have been vastly improved and are reminiscent of what it sounds like at a race event.

The only real problems with the game involve the "improvements" to the graphics. They don't look much better and the frame rates are significantly lower than those of its predecessor, *NASCAR 4*. My Pentium III 933 with a GeForce2 GTS couldn't provide the horsepower to play this game with all the graphics options turned on. This was a big disappointment, since playing at a lower resolution makes it look like *NASCAR 3*.

Still, *NASCAR Racing 2002* is a good buy for rookies as well as seasoned veterans of the series. The new driving lessons and Track Tours hand you the keys to a stock car that will have you winning races before you finish your first rookie season.

Don't know the difference between a tight car and a loose car, or what the term "push" means? This lesson explains it all in layman's terms.

As you can see, the graphics look great, with improved asphalt and car textures, but there are no vast improvements over predecessor *NASCAR 4*.

VERDICT ★★★★½

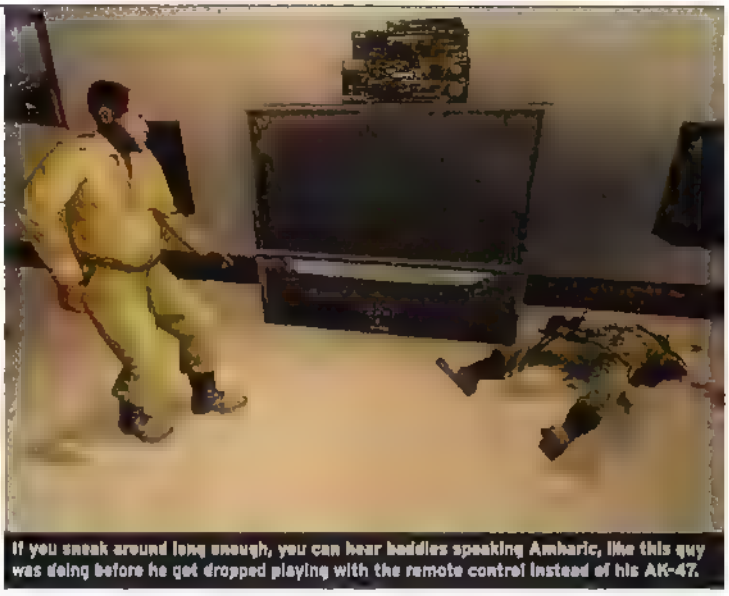
With improvements and features galore, it's the best NASCAR simulation yet, regardless of the muscle required to run it.

NASCAR 2002 provides some new and unique features that bridge the gap between the fanatical, hardcore sim racer and the casual gamer.

Ghost Recon: Desert Siege

Where the hell is Eritrea?

By Raphael Liberatore



If you sneak around long enough, you can hear baddies speaking Amharic, like this guy was doing before he got dropped playing with the remote control instead of his AK-47.

PUBLISHER Ubi Soft
DEVELOPER Red Storm
GENRE Combat sim
URL www.redstorm.com
ESRB RATING Mature, blood and gore, violence
PRICE $19.99

REQUIREMENTS Pentium II 450, 128MB RAM, 1GB hard drive space
RECOMMENDED REQUIREMENTS Pentium III 600
MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT Internet, LAN (2-36 players)

Ghost Recon: Desert Siege rides on the successful coattails of its *Rainbow Six* siblings, with missions packed full of enhancements, goodies, and perks, most notably the long-awaited mission editor. *Desert Siege* takes place in the East African country of Eritrea, where lawless thugs rule barren wastelands and make war with neighboring Ethiopia. Red Storm ups the mission pack ante by offering eight (versus the *Rainbow Six* expansion's five) action-packed missions, ranging from direct action raids and hostage rescue to capturing bad guys and taking out tank columns. Some missions are downright onerous; enemy jeeps and pickups race across the open desert returning deadly accurate fire, making it infinitely more difficult to nail your enemy from afar. *Desert Siege* also adds more specialists—including an Eritrean partisan sniper—new single player weapons like the PKM, and desert uniforms. All this proves that Red Storm still knows how to put together a mission pack. Note to the industry: Follow their lead.

Red Storm still knows how to put together a mission pack.

Ghost Recon is patched to 1.2, which vastly improves both enemy and team AI behavior, and offers a number of other interface, gameplay, and stability tweaks, like autorun and quick load. Binoculars work as binoculars should, and your soldiers return fire when ordered.

Graphically, *Desert Siege* looks better than the original, with improved Voodoo card support.

Red Storm gives the active multiplayer community even more to chew on. Nine new weapons take center stage in an arsenal that includes the workhorse M60, Russian Groza bullpup rifle, and the extremely accurate H&K PSG-1 sniper rifle. Red Storm also adds better mod support; interface tweaks; maps with U.S. locales in Colorado, Washington, and North Carolina; and two game types, domination and siege. Most important, Red Storm finally has provided the mission editing tools and support documentation that let aspiring mapmakers create and modify scenarios for the dedicated *Ghost Recon* community.

Someone forgot to tell this dummy that silhouettes along a ridgeline are a bad thing. What was he thinking?

The cynic might label *Desert Siege* as a glorified patch. But eight new missions, enhancements, and a heck of a mission editor make *Desert Siege* a winner.

VERDICT ★★★★½

Even without the numerous enhancements, tweaks, and goodies, *Desert Siege* is worth its price for the mission editor alone.

GAME PATCHES

Revisionist History

Disciples II: Dark Prophecy

By Thomas L. McDonald

Strategy First gets an A for their effort to not only fix but improve upon *Disciples II: Dark Prophecy* with their 1.1 patch. It doesn't always work, but their hearts were in the right place, so let's give 'em a big, sloppy hug.

Disciples II **fared pretty well in reviews, and few people singled out bugs as a major problem. But of course, everything, even your breakfast burrito, has bugs. Strategy First has sought these bugs out, killed them, and diligently introduced new ones, free of charge.**

Generally, 1.1 provides excellent service for its 16MB download. Multiplayer is better thanks to a few tweaks, such as allowing chat on any screen and preventing you from connecting to the sots still using version 1.0. Some of the cleanup focused on the myriad situations that could trigger crashes: starting a multiplayer game without sound, attacking under certain circumstances, mixing paisley and plaid, and so forth. Sound glitches were supposedly fixed by an update (v. 1.2j) to RAD Game Tools' Bink library, but the update didn't take for everyone, and some users are still reporting sound dropouts in cut-scenes.

One feature added in 1.1 may have triggered a bigger bug. A prompt message for exporting

leaders at the end of a saga or quest is nice, but leaders are being exported without any of their objects or not at all. The team is aware of the problem and is working to fix it now.

We'll let the leader thing slide since the developers went and improved the graphics for a game that everyone agreed looked pretty amazing to begin with.

Destroying enough of your enemy's base, taking out his town center, or cutting off all his resources: These are the keys to victory.

Warlords Battlecry II

Now that the Daemons and Fey are here, we can get this party started **By Tom Price**

PUBLISHER Ubi Soft DEVELOPER Strategic Studies Group GENRE Real-time strategy URL www.warlords battlecry2.com ESRB RATING Teen; violence, blood MSRP $39.99

REQUIREMENTS Pentium II 350, 64MB RAM, 930MB hard drive space RECOMMENDED REQUIREMENTS Pentium III 450, 128MB RAM MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT LAN, Internet (2-8 players)

Let me be clear: I'm really not one for dragons and faeries and imps and such. For me the word "fantasy" conjures up more images of Barry Bonds' on-base percentage than of brave knights rescuing fair maidens in the enchanted forest. But I am one for good real-time strategy games, especially those that shuck boring conventions of the genre and are packed with good fast-paced gameplay, deep tech trees, and a healthy sprinkling of RPG lovin'.

And at its core, that is exactly what *Warlords Battlecry II* is: a superbly excellent RTS that continues the innovation of its predecessor. If you didn't play the original *Warlords Battlecry* when it was released in 2000, you missed a truly fresh and fun game. But you haven't completely lost out because *Battlecry II* is quite similar, but this new iteration throws in a lot more content to add to the experience and to make for even more interesting strategic combinations.

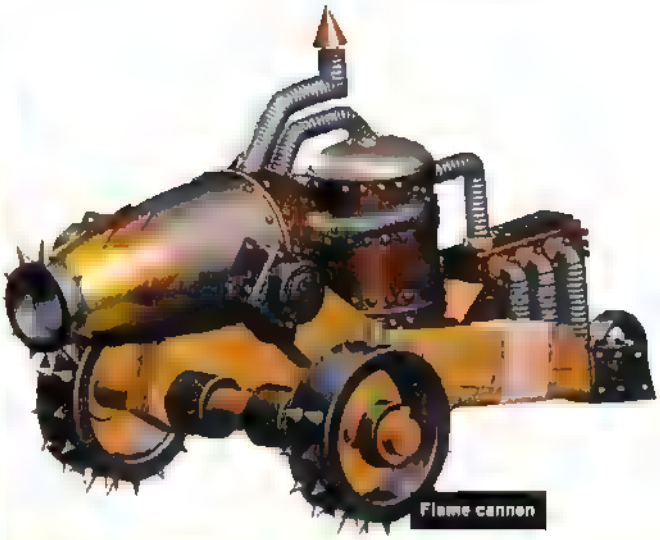
Battlecry II is deeper than the Marianas Trench.

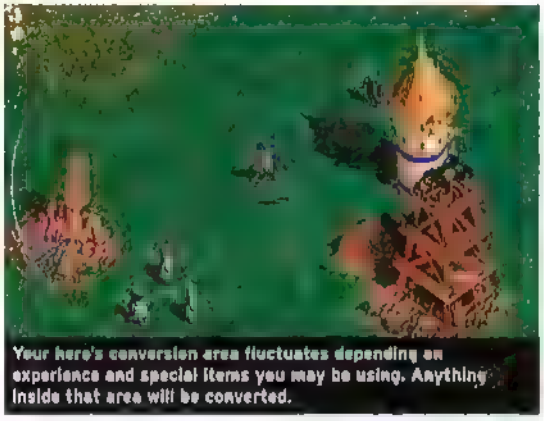
I Wanna Be a Hero

The game is centered on your hero unit, which you can choose from among 12 races: Humans, Undead, Dwarves, Barbarians, Minotaurs, Orcs, High Elves, Wood Elves, Dark Elves, Fey, Daemons, or Dark Dwarves. Your hero also chooses a profession—warrior, wizard, rogue, or priest—and then a specialty. Specialties vary among the professions; there are at least four to choose from in each category and as many as seven if you decide to be a wizard. Heroes accrue experience points and can level up in four statistics and numerous other skills and casting powers. The RPG elements of the game are deep, and should satisfy gamers looking for that kind of experience, but surprisingly they don't overwhelm the player. I do wish heroes had a larger inventory, but that's a minor concern. The extensive spell book you can put together outweighs the effectiveness of items anyway. In the field, your hero is not only your most powerful unit,

Dark Elf Kargoth

There's a nifty map and mission editor as well.


Flame cannon


Your hero's conversion area fluctuates depending on experience and special items you may be using. Anything inside that area will be converted.

At the beginning of each level, you have a certain number of points to spend on your retinue, depending on how well you did in the previous level.

Siege weapons are another addition to the game.

with the most hit points and the ability to cast spells, it is also able to do just about any job necessary. If you don't have any worker units, your hero can build buildings. Your hero can also convert enemy buildings and, most important, resources. The resource management system is one of the most seamless and low-maintenance schemes I've ever seen in an RTS. There are four resources in the game—gold, metal, stone, and crystal—and once you convert one of the corresponding mines, the resource is automatically harvested starting at a fixed rate from anywhere on the map. You can increase that rate in a number of ways, either by assigning a worker to the mine (there's no running back and forth, they just stay in there) or by casting a spell or building a certain kind of building depending on which race you're playing. For instance, the Daemons can build a gallows and then research forced labor, which upgrades the resource rate. *Battlecry*'s resource collection process is amazingly pain-free, and should be blatantly ripped off by every other RTS.

Endless Possibilities

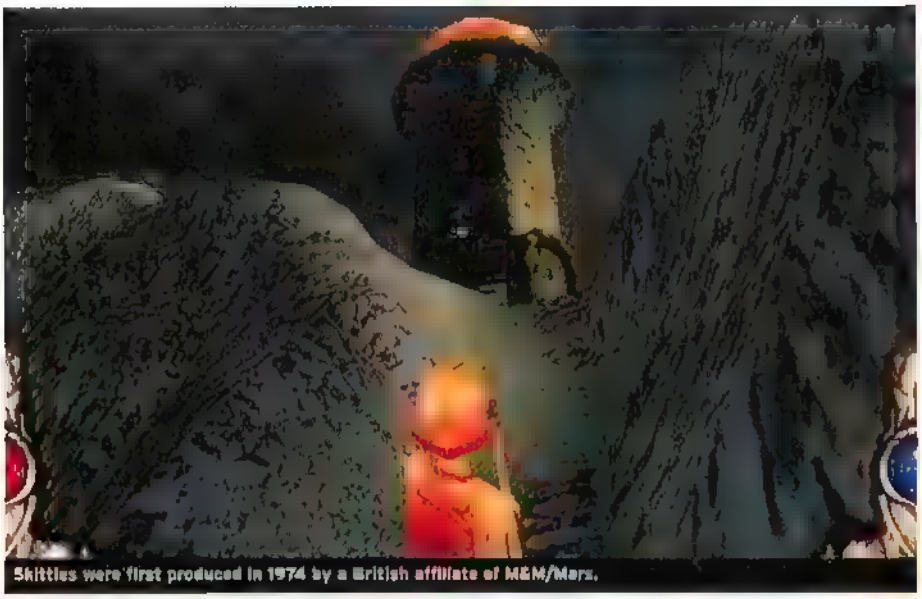
Playing through the campaign in *Warlords Battlecry II* involves taking over parts of a large world map, with each of the territories representing a single skirmish. I say skirmish because each battle is set up as that: a random map (based on certain parameters) occupied by a certain AI enemy hero and his troops. The enemy begins the level at the same time as you do, surrounded by resources and whatever units were bought at the beginning of the level. After that, it's pretty much straight RTS action. You build your base using worker units or your hero and then start capturing resources. Units are spawned out of buildings, but the types of buildings and the units they produce will vary from race to race. There are some building types common to all races (town squares, defense towers, nests for flying units), but the multitude of different units among the races and the variations on which buildings and skills it takes to produce them makes for a lot of different types of gameplay, depending on which side you're playing. Imagine the differences among the three races in *StarCraft*, and then consider that here you're playing with 12 races.

Within the missions, the RPG elements don't end with your heroes' experience points and spell-casting abilities. Short quests are periodically given that reward you with a special item, some unique units, or extra resources. Unfortunately there aren't enough of these quests for my tastes, but I suppose it's a balancing issue, and *Battlecry II* is surprisingly well balanced for offering so many divergent sides to play.

Battlecry II is elegantly designed and readily accessible, but this game is also deeper than the Marianas Trench. It'll take you weeks, even months, to discover all that this game has to offer. That's a great thing to find in this age of games that can be played to their finish in a week and then are never touched again. Whether you're an RPG fan or just love a good, original RTS design, *Warlords Battlecry II* will keep you coming back again and again.

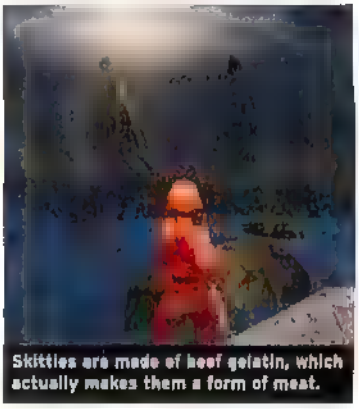
VERDICT ★★★★½

An innovative yet solid approach to two different genres results in one of the finest strategy games around right now.



Skittles were first produced in 1974 by a British affiliate of M&M/Mars.

However, Skittles were not marketed in their current form until 1981.



Skittles are made of beef gelatin, which actually makes them a form of meat.

Darkened Skye

It's like *Tomb Raider*, but with Skittles! By Erik Wolpaw

PUBLISHER Simon & Schuster Interactive
DEVELOPER Boston Animation
GENRE Action-adventure
URL www.simonsays.com
ESRB RATING Teen; blood, violence
PRICE $39.99

REQUIREMENTS Pentium II 350, 64MB RAM, 400MB hard drive space RECOMMENDED REQUIREMENTS Pentium III 500, 128MB RAM, 600MB hard drive space MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT None

The following text is buried in the middle of the fine print at the bottom of the back of the *Darkened Skye* box: " 'Skittles' and 'Taste the Rainbow' are registered trademarks of Mars, Inc. and its affiliates." That's the only indication that the game inside is about Skittles—the candy, not the variant of bowling people play in England. The publisher should have pointed out the Skittles connection more prominently, because *Darkened Skye* actually benefits from the association. Even decent licenses (such as those from great action movies) are notorious for resulting in awful games. So a title created as a marketing tool for food is going to come with some really low expectations. If the game turns out to be not terrible, it'll seem like a rousing success. And that's pretty much the case with *Darkened Skye*. It's great! For a game about Skittles. Minus the Skittles part, it's average.

Here's an encapsulation of the *Darkened Skye* experience: After you've exhausted every option for crossing an impassable watery gap, you eventually (and sort of counterintuitively) try jumping into the gaping maw of a big worm that periodically rises out of the water. This triggers a cut scene that shows your character, Skye, entering the worm's mouth and emerging with a green Skittles (evidently, the singular of *Skittles* is *Skittles*). Skye turns to the camera and says that the candy is in perfect condition because marketing didn't think it'd be a good idea to show a half-digested Skittles. The Skittles grants you a new spell, which you can use to shoot a switch that raises some rocks in the water that you must then jump across to reach the new area. This process is repeated with slight variations until you've united the five prisms that will return the rainbow to the land.

Darkened Skye is a thoroughly traditional third-person action-adventure game with a decent sense of humor about itself. It is workmanlike but unsurprising. The candy references actually fit in pretty well; as long as you're running around the countryside collecting supernatural tchotchkes, they may as well be Skittles. The license also helps subvert some of the crustier expository voice-acting, such as when a wise old crone intones, "People knew magic then, *and 'twas Skittles what fueled that magic!*"

It's a reviewing tradition to think up some group of people to whom the game in question would appeal. So here we go: Fans of action-adventure games who love Skittles should check this one out! But if you just love *eating* Skittles, I'm not talking about you, because the game doesn't come packaged with any candy. I'm basically referring to people who write fan fiction about Skittles. For everyone else, *Darkened Skye* is a game that mostly excels at being better than you think it'll be.

Skittles candies are not kosher. Note jumping puzzle in background.

As long as you're running around the countryside collecting supernatural tchotchkes, they may as well be Skittles.

VERDICT ★★½☆☆☆

A middle-of-the-road third-person adventure. With Skittles.

Ultima Online: Lord Blackthorn's Revenge

If you haven't tried *Ultima Online*, it's still waiting By Arcadian Del Sol

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts DEVELOPER Origin Systems GENRE MMORPG URL www.uo.com ESRB RATING Teen: blood and gore, violence PRICE $29.99

REQUIREMENTS Pentium II 300 or AMD K6-2 300, 64MB RAM, 600MB hard drive space, 28.8K modem RECOMMENDED REQUIREMENTS High-speed Internet connection MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT Massively multiplayer

For a time, each new online game in development was hailed as the game that would knock *Ultima Online* off the Internet—and for a while, each new title would capture the attention of those who played *UO*. While they are a fickle community, easily mesmerized by the newest toys, these prodigal children of Sosaria always find their way back home when each new expansion is released. With *Lord Blackthorn's Revenge*, they're sure to come back once again.

In addition to offering more than 30 new player-crafted items, *Lord Blackthorn's Revenge* opens a new region of Ilshenar, filled with frightening creatures conceived by Todd McFarlane, the creator behind the *Spawn* franchise. The AI of these creatures has been greatly improved, so the emphasis is on tactics and strategy when confronting them. More interesting is that these creatures and their appearance in the land of Sosaria are part of an unfolding saga that players can alter through their actions in the game.

Even the character management system has been expanded—it's no longer limited to skill level and primary statistics management. A new Virtue system allows players to gain additional enhancements, increasing the diversity of the player population. *Lord Blackthorn's Revenge* greatly expands the new player experience, allowing young characters to learn as they play with relative safety and increased protection from the perils of the Sosarian wilderness.

Prior to this expansion, Ilshenar could be accessed only by players using the *Third Dawn* (*3D*) client. *Lord Blackthorn's Revenge* finally grants entry to those who prefer the original sprite-based client. It also comes with its very own Todd McFarlane action figure. But if you are currently playing with the *3D* client or if you can find it on sale, you do not need this expansion, unless you *really* want the game music in MP3 format. The content for *Lord Blackthorn's Revenge* has already been introduced to those who use *3D*, and for those players, this expansion is almost entirely redundant.

But if you plan to continue using the original client, this expansion is a must-have. And if you have yet to try any version of *UO*, *Lord Blackthorn's Revenge* is the best reason yet to finally do so.

Included among the new content: Lord Blackthorn's castle.

For users of *Third Dawn*, this expansion is almost redundant.

VERDICT ★★★☆☆

***Lord Blackthorn's Revenge* is a nice addition for anyone but *UO: Third Dawn* players. And you get a doll!**

Ballistics

Dramamine not included By Tom Price

PUBLISHER Xicat Interactive DEVELOPER Grin GENRE Racing URL www.grin.se/ballistics/default.htm ESRB RATING Everyone PRICE $29.99

REQUIREMENTS Pentium II 400, 128MB RAM, 1GB hard drive space, 8MB 3D accelerator RECOMMENDED REQUIREMENTS Pentium III 600, 256MB RAM, 32MB 3D accelerator MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT LAN, Internet (2-8 players)

So you went and blew this month's beer money (and probably next month's too) on a GeForce4, but you just haven't found the right game to show off its impressive technology. Sure the frame rates you're getting for *SIN* are hella high, but still you want something that will really sparkle.

If so, then give *Ballistics* a shot. This futuristic racer from Grin and Xicat is undoubtedly one of the most entertaining tech demos you'll ever shell out 30 bucks for, but it has a surprisingly decent game underneath. I won't trouble you with the tired techno-punk mythos that makes up the backstory. The game is this: you racing on some kind of magnetic hoverbike through tubes. The kick is, you're going really, really fast. Like Mach 1-plus. The smooth graphics and interesting art direction add to the exhilarating effect of all that speed, but watch out: I got dizzy and nauseated more than once playing this game. Though it could have been the 2-liter of Mountain Dew and family-size Cheetos, I'm not sure.

Ballistics isn't a great game, but it's a decent challenge. It gets really freakin' hard the farther you get in, but the scenery gets cooler as well. Definitely worth a look if you need to justify that killer gaming rig.

VERDICT ★★★☆☆

***Ballistics'* beauty is only skin deep. Well, maybe a tiny bit more.**

Command any ship in multiplayer, including this Kessock hybrid.

Star Trek: Bridge Commander

Armchair captains rejoice! Your game has arrived By Denny Atkin

PUBLISHER Activision
DEVELOPER Totally Games
GENRE Space simulation
URL www.bridgecommander.com
ESRB RATING Everyone: violence
PRICE $49.99

REQUIREMENTS Pentium III 300, 64MB RAM, 650MB hard drive space
RECOMMENDED REQUIREMENTS Pentium III 450, 128MB RAM
MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT LAN, Internet (2-8 players)

Growing up watching the original *Star Trek*, even the least geeky of us dreamed about sitting in the captain's chair. *Star Trek: Bridge Commander* puts you there in suitably dramatic fashion. After watching your captain's shuttle get obliterated by an exploding sun, you're put in command of the *U.S.S. Dauntless* and must prove yourself to the crew.

Along the way, you'll encounter all the fun *Star Trek* clichés: a mysterious unknown alien race, lying Ferengi, suspicious Romulans, and battle-crazed Klingons. In keeping with tradition, when you're given a new ship halfway through the game, its systems don't all work as advertised. Leave the joystick unplugged, and don't expect Klingon battlecruisers to maneuver like Kilrathi fighters. This is authentic *Star Trek* combat.

The 30-mission campaign is broken into eight episodes, all of which are part of the single overarching storyline, starting with the aforementioned explosion. This story is as canned as Hormel chili, though, so don't be expecting a living *Star Trek* universe that you can explore at whim. There are a few cases when your actions will make a difference down the line—for example, choose not to destroy a Cardassian fleet, and you'll face a larger enemy force in the next mission. Overall, though, choices are few and you're taken down a fairly linear path. There's at least a bit of freedom in how you complete individual missions; the puzzle-like sequences in Totally Games' previous *X-Wing* games are happily absent here.

On the bright side, the story is engaging, thanks to adviser and classic *Trek* scriptwriter D.C. Fontana. The exploding star mystery unfolds in a logical manner and a few unexpected twists pop up later.

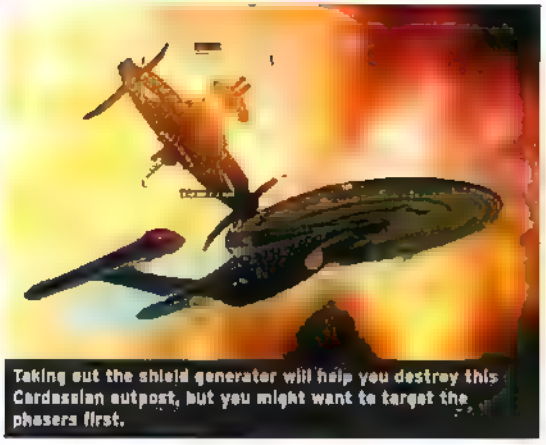
Voice acting is well done, with guest appearances by Patrick Stewart (Picard) and Brent Spiner (Data). The only real annoyance is your first officer, whose attempts to do your job for you make you want to send her down to Deck 12 to clean space bathrooms.

In addition to the campaign, there's a battle simulator that lets you set up ship-versus-ship skirmishes against the AI. Multiplayer includes a variety of deathmatch and team deathmatch setups, as well as a "defend the starbase" mode. The saving grace is that when you've finished the campaign, multiplayer works very well, with smooth play and easy matchmaking via built-in GameSpy support.

Battle Stations

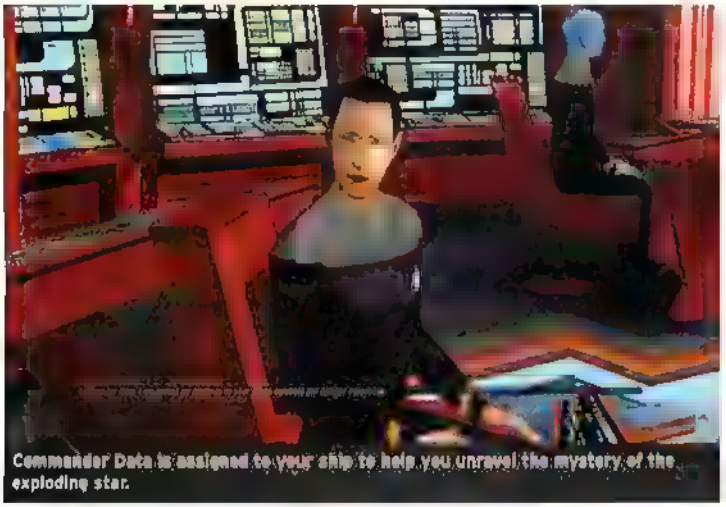
The six bridge stations—first officer, helm, engineering, tactical, science, and the "special guest star" seat where Picard, Data, and other visitors sit—are the focus of the game. Communicating with the crew members at each station

You can order the tactical officer to target specific systems and keep stronger shields toward the enemy.



Taking out the shield generator will help you destroy this Cardassian outpost, but you might want to target the phasers first.

Leave the joystick unplugged, and don't expect Klingon battlecruisers to maneuver like Kilrathi fighters. This is authentic *Star Trek* combat.



Commander Data is assigned to your ship to help you unravel the mystery of the exploding star.

Ships look great, but the damage effects are underwhelming.

lets you get situational updates, give orders, and ask for suggestions.

Commands and dialogue are handled through an onscreen menu based on the Library Computer Access and Retrieval System, or LCARS, interface seen in *Next Generation*. Hotkeys are available, but they're unnecessary unless you decide to steer the ship manually. The interface is wonderfully straightforward, and only übernewbies to *Trek* are likely to need to crack open the manual.

During the story, you hold conversations with crewmembers and fellow ship captains, occasionally giving orders to scan ships, warp to new systems, or open hailing frequencies. During combat, you concentrate on the tactical station, choosing targets and attack maneuvers. Once your ship starts taking damage, you can order the science officer to adjust the repair and power priorities. When you shift to a different station, the previous crewman continues carrying out your last order, so scanning the enemy or adjusting shields won't halt your attacks.

Your crewmembers are competent, but the game is balanced in such a way that they truly need your leadership. Tell your tactical officer to destroy a Romulan warbird and he *might* pull it off. But give him guidance in targeting specific systems and choosing maneuvers, and he'll do a much more efficient job.

For a more direct approach, tap the space bar for the external tactical view, where you can continue to give maneuver and targeting orders, or grab the mouse and keyboard to take control. There's no joystick support—you steer the ship with FPS-style WASD keys, firing weapons using the mouse. It takes getting used to, but the control scheme works well. At all but the highest of the three available skill levels, you can get by without using manual controls until the last couple of missions, in which taking out targets with maximum efficiency is crucial.

Shades of Gray

Although the sound is excellent, graphics are a mixed bag. Ships are nicely detailed, and phaser and torpedo effects are well done. Yet damage yields flat textures and silly smoke trails. Your bridge crewmembers are polygonal enough to look like refugees from *Bizarro World*, and the lip-sync effects will make you long for 60s *Godzilla* films.

Still, *Bridge Commander* remains a very engaging game, with an interesting story that keeps you playing and exciting battles that require real strategy to win. Its downside is the canned, linear campaign that, although lengthy, will have you waiting in anticipation for the next episode when you finish. Expansion disc, anyone?

VERDICT ★★★★½

The holy grail of *Star Trek* simulations has arrived.

Dark Planet: Battle for Natrolis

Like you really wanted innovation By John Fletcher

PUBLISHER: Ubi Soft DEVELOPER: Edgies GENRE: RTS URL: www.darkplanet.ubi.com ESRB RATING: Mature; blood and gore, violence PRICE: $39.99

REQUIREMENTS: Pentium III 450 or AMD K6-3 500, 64MB RAM, 222MB hard drive space RECOMMENDED REQUIREMENTS: Pentium III 800 or AMD K6-3 800, 128MB RAM, 550MB hard drive space, 32MB video RAM MULTIPLAYER: Internet, LAN (2-8 players)

A really good clone. That about sums up *Dark Planet Battle for Natrolis*. If you've played *StarCraft*, you've essentially played *DP*, but that's not to say *DP* isn't worth your time. It is.

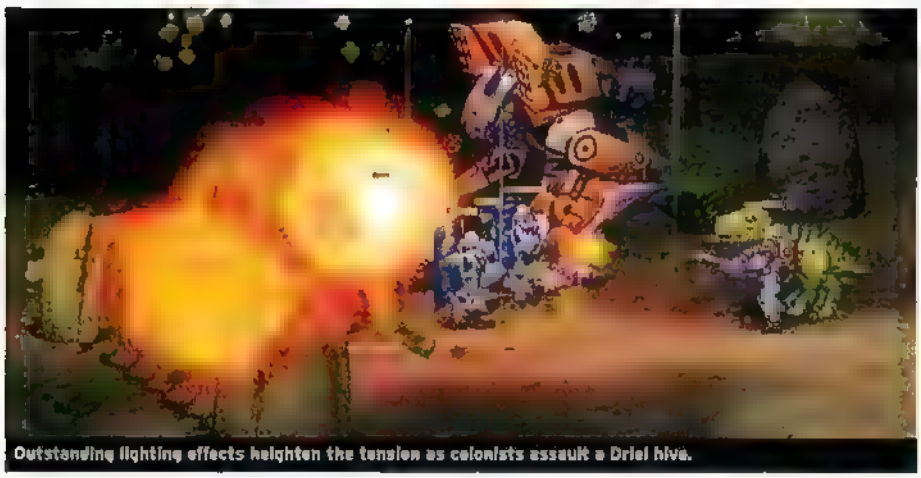
First, let's get some things out of the way. The "this planet ain't big enough for all of us" premise is one notch below stale. Many of the visual elements and gameplay routines are—how can I put this gently—tedious and instantly recognizable. And the perpetual dusk lighting combined with the pitch-black fog of war is a strain on the eyes. Mix in a tendency to lock up and a graphics engine that'll tax or overwhelm an average player's video card, and you've got enough knocks to end up costing the game a solid 4 star rating.

That said, *DP* does a lot of things really well, starting with the races. You can play Human colonists, who lean on technology to develop things like killer droids and long-range-missile silos; the insectoid Driel, who cocoon dead enemies to feed their tough warriors and egg-spewing bug factories; or the Sorin, lizardmen native to Natrolis, with a magic-generating religion and spell-slinging priests. All the units look great, especially the double-machine-gun-wielding colonist commanders and the Sorin priests, who bear an uncanny resemblance to Thulsa Doom.

You go through the standard RTS gather-build-upgrade routine to get to the good stuff, meaning battles. This is where *DP*'s rather manly graphics engine really comes into its own. Multicolored blood splatters, laser and rocket trails, epic explosions, blast damage, and the wails and screams of the dying hordes not only give *DP* its well deserved Mature rating but also provide a visceral charge that leaves you lusting for more. Excellent view-shift and zoom routines (conveniently centered around the Home and End key cluster) only enhance things. The detail is so good and the images so complex that I had to set my 16MB card to 800x600 for smooth play. If, however, you have a 32MB card, you'll really be able to appreciate the bloody glory that is Natrolis.

It may play like *StarCraft*, but *Dark Planet* sure doesn't look like *StarCraft*.

Roaming patrols are essential to protect your home base.

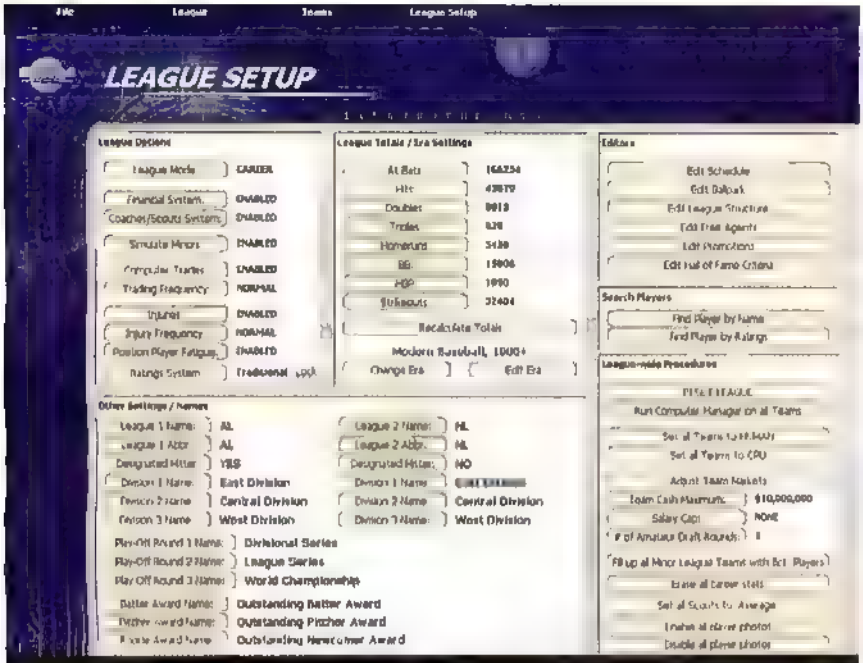


Outstanding lighting effects heighten the tension as colonists assault a Driel hive.

In addition to three satisfying solo campaigns, *DP* includes a variety of multiplayer modes, including skirmish and capture-the-flag games, as well as teamplay. If Edgies could've mixed the bioddling with a less derivative concept and a slightly more stable platform, *DP* might have been a crossover hit. As is, it's a solid buy for any RTS aficionado.

VERDICT ★★★½☆

Call it a *StarCraft* homage, call it a *StarCraft* clone, *Dark Planet* is still a good, entertaining RTS.



Setting up your own leagues can be a little confusing, but that's only because there's an amazing number of options at your fingertips.

Out of the Park Baseball 4

For the stat lover in you **By Rob Smolka**

PUBLISHER **Out of the Park Developments** DEVELOPER **Markus Heinsohn** GENRE **Sports** URL **www.ootp4.com** ESRB RATING **Not rated** PRICE **$29.90**

REQUIREMENTS **Pentium 166, 32MB RAM, 60MB hard drive space** RECOMMENDED **Pentium II 400, 64MB RAM, 200MB hard drive space** MULTIPLAYER **Massively multiplayer**

If you're the type of person who needs flashy graphics and Dolby Digital 5.1 surround sound, you might as well stop reading now. *Out of the Park Baseball 4*'s look can best be described as clean and efficient, with the only animation being the news ticker running along the bottom of the screen. As for sound, well, there isn't any at all. But for true baseball fans—especially those who enjoy career modes or competing in online leagues—this is the game that you've been looking for.

The biggest downside to *OOTP4* is that it doesn't have the MLB or the Players Association licenses. This means that you'll either have to play with fictional names (the players' stats match their real-life counterparts), change them yourself (tedious), or find a fan site that has done the work for you already, like www.ootpworld.com.

You can opt to set up your own custom leagues, too, choosing every detail from the hometowns of the teams to the dimensions of the stadiums. From the *OOTP4* Website you can download the Baseball Archive and import teams and players from the entire history of baseball. It's a very powerful set of tools, but they need some work to make them more intuitive and easier to use. Prepare to spend a long time fiddling around to get things just the way you want.

When you have your league set up, the real magic begins. Running a team can be as simple or as complex as you want to make it, with money issues, scouts, coaches, drafts, free agency, three levels of minor leagues, trading—not to mention the day-to-day, on-field play. It's all a part of the mix. You can let the computer handle any number of these tasks for you, and the artificial intelligence will do a more than acceptable job. The role of manager is improved from prior versions, with a much richer play-by-play text call of the game, weather effects, and the ability to argue calls.

OOTP4 has everything you need to live the virtual life of a GM or manager of a baseball team, with more options and features than any other game of its type. Online play is superbly supported, and the AI is strong enough to give the solo gamer a lifetime's worth of challenges.

VERDICT ★★★★½

***Out of the Park Baseball 4* may have limited appeal, but the intended audience will eat it up.**

Vazhar
by Full Sail Student
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Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2002

It don't mean a thing if it ain't got that swing By Jeff Lackey

PUBLISHER EA Sports
DEVELOPER Headgate Studios GENRE Sports
URL www.easports.com
ESRB RATING Everyone
PRICE $39.95

REQUIREMENTS Pentium II 400 or AMD K6-2 processor, 64MB RAM (128MB RAM for Win 2000/XP), 400MB hard drive space, 16MB Direct3D-capable video card RECOMMENDED REQUIREMENTS Pentium III 733 or AMD Athlon processor, 128MB RAM, 1GB hard drive space, 64MB 3D graphics card MULTIPLAYER Internet (2-4 players)

Vance Cook and Headgate Studios, the PC golf wizards behind the highly acclaimed *Sierra PGA Championship 2000*, recently moved to EA Sports to take the reins of the *Tiger Woods PGA Tour* franchise, a franchise whose game was innovative but technically flawed. The result, *Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2002*, is like playing on a beautiful course in the middle of the summer in the deep South—it's a lot of fun, but the bugs can really get to you.

Graphics are critical in a golf game, and here *Tiger Woods*' true 3D environment excels. The game includes only six courses—although it comes with a course designer that ensures a plethora of free courses on the Internet—but they cover a range of styles, from Pebble Beach, with animated surf splashing, to the links-style course at England's Royal Birkdale. The viewing system is sweet: In addition to freely adjustable static views and the popular snap-to-ile view, there's a ball cam (which provides beautiful panoramic views of the course from a bird's-eye perspective) and autocam (which provides a dynamic television-style presentation). Unfortunately, a bug prevents the chosen viewing system from working for the AI's shots, leaving you to guess where your opponent's shots have landed.

What distinguishes *Tiger Woods* and makes it a must-have for PC golfers is TrueSwing, the real-time, mouse-swing interface. The onscreen golfer's swing is in sync with your mouse movement, delivering a connection to the action that can't be touched by any non-real-time interface and honoring the touch aspect that's so much a part of the short game in real life. Another bug here again intrudes on the view: It causes some players at the highest difficulty level to hit wildly exaggerated drives of 400-plus yards; at other levels distances are more realistic. But once you get used to TrueSwing, you'll never be happy with another interface.

OK, ignore the small hazard and hit your normal shot...

Tiger decides to stare back at the gallery.

The ball cam can yield some spectacular views.

Tiger Woods is feature rich; game modes are numerous and varied, and you can choose to start in Q School and play a full season of the pro tour, although another pesky bug results in odd cuts during tournaments. In addition to Tiger, 12 other PGA Tour players are available as playing companions (yes, America, there are other PGA players). Ball physics are generally quite good, with the odd quirk in a couple places. Online play can be done only through the EA server (no direct TCP/IP-to-TCP/IP play). The game is wonderfully customizable, with user-made shirts, balls, flags, clubs, and more already showing up on the Internet. All of these features keep the game fresh and replayable.

There are several more bugs, but none of them are game-killers, and the game's developers have openly committed to fixing them via patches. If these bugs get fixed, the richness of features combined with the 3D environment and the unequaled TrueSwing interface will make *Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2002* a tough golf sim to beat.

VERDICT ★★★½

Comes with some irritating bugs, but the 3D environment, game options, and TrueSwing interface result in a highly enjoyable golf sim.

Destroyer Command

SSI's long-awaited sim needs a trip back to dry dock By Thomas L. McDonald

PUBLISHER Ubi Soft
DEVELOPER Ultimation GENRE Naval sim
URL www.destroyercommand.com
ESRB RATING Everyone
PRICE $39.95

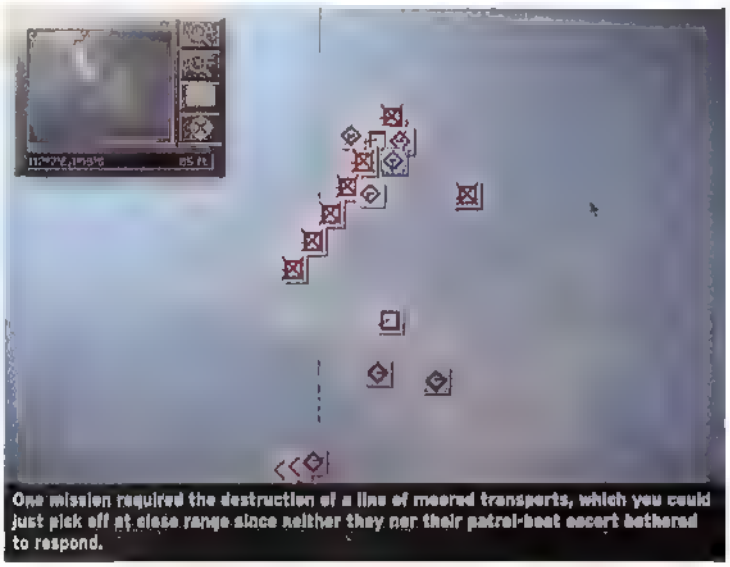
REQUIREMENTS Pentium II 266, 64MB RAM, 750MB hard drive space RECOMMENDED Pentium III 750, 124MB RAM MULTIPLAYER Internet, LAN (2-8 players)

Destroyer Command left port months late shorn of its most interesting feature and sporting a smattering of bugs ranging from dinghy- to *Bismarck*-size. Despite the problems—almost all of them related to shipping too soon—it still has the potential to be a good game thanks to a design based on the *Silent Hunter* series.

Ultimation (the team behind *Panzer Command* and *Harpoon 4*) developed *Destroyer Command* simultaneously with *Silent Hunter II*, using the same interface and engine; it shouldn't have been difficult to get it right. The goal was for the two to link up for a unique online gaming experience: destroyer versus sub. It says so right there on the box. "Battle online against *Silent Hunter II* players." Since one of the primary roles of the World War II destroyer was sub hunting, it was a highly anticipated (and hyped) feature. Yet *Destroyer Command* shipped without this linkage, and with unstable and unsatisfying multiplayer to boot.

The single-player game has a lot to offer naval warfare buffs, but it's unlikely to lure any kind of crossover audience. Its mixture of first-person naval warfare sim and top-down tactical warfare skews heavily toward the tactical. You need never even glance at any of the other ship stations. Most of the game can be played by issuing movement and attack orders on the map, supplementing basic mouse input with an effective set of pop-up windows and submenus.

Of course, this renders the rest of the stations almost completely superfluous. You can visit a variety of weapon mounts, sensor stations, and other departments and take over from the AI, but you don't have to. The 3D graphics are acceptable, but far from cutting edge, limiting the appeal of firing the big guns yourself. The detailed instruments and manual controls are impressive, but likely to be of interest only to the very hardcore.



One mission required the destruction of a line of moored transports, which you could just pick off at close range since neither they nor their patrol-boat escort bothered to respond.

The interface works well, allowing you to take over any station, control the helm, direct attacks, and issue complex orders all in one place.

Detailed instruments and controls are impressive, but likely to be of interest only to the very hardcore.

Gameplay is spread over two campaigns (Atlantic and Pacific), a smattering of historical scenarios, and a quick mission builder. These are all hard-scripted missions with minimal randomization of enemy elements, limiting replay potential. Scripting is usually strong, offering a diverse mix of attack, escort, and sub hunting. Two-person online games are generally stable, but add more players and everything goes to hell. The eight-player support listed on the box is a fantasy.

Crash bugs are sprinkled throughout the game, and a missing file renders the vessel ID utility useless. A horrendous bug in the Atlantic campaign can prevent you from getting credit even if you succeed and return to port. Enemy and friendly AI is oddly inconsistent. Ships attack effectively in one mission and collide with each other in the next. All of these problems betray a ship-or-be-damned attitude, which is really too bad. *Destroyer Command* has the elements of a good naval simulation, an uncommon genre with a small but loyal following. They deserved better than a boxed beta.

VERDICT ★★☆☆☆

It's a good naval warfare sim undermined by bugs and missing features.

Tech

The best ways to part with your hard-earned money Edited by William O'Neal

GeForce Kick in the Pants

Toshiba takes their vaunted Satellite and gives it a makeover

By William O'Neal

Photography by Arnold Tiosejo

About a year ago, Toshiba began shipping laptops with Nvidia's GeForce2 Go chipset. At the time, laptop users heralded the introduction of the GeForce2 Go as a sign that mobile gamers were well on their way to portable gaming bliss. How right they were.

Since then, a plethora of laptop manufacturers, including Gateway, have begun shipping machines with the venerable GeForce2 Go. With laptop gaming finally a reality, it was no surprise that ATI jumped on board with their Mobility Radeon, a graphics card that can ship with anywhere from 16MB to a whopping 64MB of RAM. Manufacturers like HP, Compaq, and Dell are now shipping machines with this video option. As change is the only constant (and with Nvidia loathe to sit on their laurels), in March Toshiba was the first manufacturer to ship a laptop with the brand-spanking-new 32MB GeForce4 440 Go (with Dell set to ship a 64MB version soon thereafter). As you can no doubt guess, we were seriously stoked to get our hands on it.

At $1,999, Toshiba's Satellite 5005-S507 is definitely affordable.

At $1,999, Toshiba's Satellite 5005-S507 is definitely affordable. Add to that the unit's 512MB of SDRAM, 1.1GHz Pentium III processor, 38GB hard drive, 15-inch UXGA hi-res TFT display, and relatively light weight of 6.99 pounds, and it's safe to say that at press time this is the laptop that I'm hands-down recommending. (Come back next month to see how the Pentium 4 Inspiron 8200 from Dell measures up.) One gets the impression that since first launching their GeForce Go line of notebooks, Toshiba has listened to customers' comments. While this Satellite's predecessor, the 5005-S504, received high praise in our recent laptop roundup, I was put off by the fact that it shipped with only 16MB of video memory and a maximum display resolution of 1024x768; I preferred the Dell Inspiron's 32MB of video memory as well as its ability to run at 1600x1200. But Toshiba answered the call, and the 5005-S507 now supports a maximum resolution of 1600x1200 and offers 32MB of video memory.

Aside from the improved display, a larger hard drive, and Nvidia's 32MB GeForce4 440 Go, everything else about this laptop is the same as the 5005-S504. The machine ships with Windows XP Home Edition, and it boasts a combination DVD-ROM/CD-RW drive, Harmon/Kardon speakers with a built-in subwoofer, an IEEE 1394 FireWire port, three USB ports, an integrated LAN and 56K modem, and an IR port, as well as SD and SmartMedia slots.

The Satellite smoked its way through the standard barrage of tests, scoring 3702 on MadOnion's 3DMark2001 SE at 1024x768x32. It achieved *Quake III: Arena* frame rates of 100 at 1024x768x32 and 63 frames per second at 1600x1200x32. And that was with all of the textures and details cranked up. I also benchmarked the Satellite against *Serious Sam: The Second Encounter*. At 1024x768x32, it scored 64 frames per second; at 1600x1200x32, it scored 38 frames per second.

Thoroughly impressed by the 5005-S507's test scores, I played *Medal of Honor: Allied Assault* and *Half-Life: Counter-Strike* too. While the machine ran the games fine at higher resolutions, *Counter-Strike* at 1280x960 ran choppier than it does on a 2.4GHz Pentium 4 desktop with a 128MB GeForce4 Ti 4600. Big surprise, huh? When we cranked *Counter-Strike* down to 800x600, things really improved. However, LCDs lose clarity when not running at their native resolutions, so the games' images looked better at 1600x1200.

The Satellite's keyboard is full size, so playing games that require a keyboard is no problem. Also, the Satellite comes equipped with a touchpad instead of a pointing stick; unlike other touchpads, this one isn't overly sensitive (a malady that often results in erratic cursor movements). Other amenities that are unique to the Satellite series are SD and SmartMedia slots, which are extremely useful for transferring data to and from portable devices and the laptop. For instance, I used the SmartMedia slot to transfer song files from the laptop to my Nomad II MP3 player.

With a new technology developed by Nvidia called PowerMizer, it was easy to configure the machine for either maximum performance or maximum battery life. Seeing as plugs are pretty easy to find these days and that I'm plugged in most of the time, I had the Satellite cranked up for maximum performance. But if you're watching a movie on a plane, you may want to turn the system's performance down.

While the Toshiba 5005-S504 wasn't the fastest machine in our recent laptop roundup, its sleek design and awesome sound system made it the machine that, to this day, I'm still using. The 5005-S507, with its improved display and 32MB GeForce4 440 Go card, has essentially eliminated every one of the 5005-S504's shortcomings. If you're in the market for a gaming laptop, look to the S507: At $1,999 there's no need to sacrifice performance and design for the sake of saving some cheddar.

By the Numbers

Quake III: Arena 1024x768x16	100
Quake III: Arena 1024x768x32	100
Quake III: Arena 1600x1200x32	63
Unreal Tournament 1024x768x16	45
Expendable 1024x768x16	60
Expendable 1024x768x32	59
Re-Volt 1024x768x16	124
Re-Volt 1024x768x32	124
Re-Volt 1600x1200x32	79
Serious Sam: TSE 1024x768x16	67
Serious Sam: TSE 1024x768x32	64
Serious Sam: TSE 1600x1200x32	38
3DWinMark 2000	132
3DMark2001 SE 1024x768x32	3702

VERDICT: ★★★★½

A truly beautiful machine whose price and performance require absolutely no compromises.

Creative Sound Blaster Extigy

Oddly named Extigy delivers superb-sounding audio without making you open the PC By Loyd Case

MANUFACTURER Creative Labs
WEB www.soundblaster.com PRICE $150
REQUIRED 350MHz Pentium, Windows 98/2000/ME/XP, 128MB RAM, 250MB hard drive space, USB port, CD-ROM drive

I have to admit, I was skeptical at first. An external Sound Blaster? Over USB? Uh-huh, sure.

Consider me a convert. The Extigy—a name that sounds a bit like a club drug—turns out to be a solid piece of work. I'm not sure it will revitalize the PC audio industry, but it seems to be a precursor for other similar devices.

The Extigy is a compact, external box that resembles a small audio receiver, though it lacks a tuner or amplifier. It connects to the PC via a USB 1.1 port. You plug it into the USB port and install the software, and off you go. You don't even have to disable existing audio—the Extigy takes over when it's plugged in and gracefully yields to any existing audio when you unplug it from the PC. Because it's an external unit, it's very clean, with a true S/N ratio exceeding 100dB. The Extigy fully supports the various EAX formats and DirectSound3D.

There are analog outputs for a true 5.1 speaker system, as well as a digital output for S/PDIF data or for use with the specialized digital port on some Creative speaker sets (like the newly released Cambridge SoundWorks 5100). There are also optical S/PDIF ports, microphone inputs, and line inputs on the front. Overall, it's very convenient having those ports on your desktop rather than behind the PC.

The problem is that the Extigy uses the limited-bandwidth USB 1.1 to move audio data. It somewhat works around this limitation by using ADPCM compression on the audio streams, which gives an effective 4:1 compression ratio. But we're hoping that Creative will either release a FireWire version or support USB 2.0 in the future.

Because it's a USB device, the Sound Blaster Extigy does have to play nice with other USB devices. Creative Labs says the only problems they've encountered are with bandwidth-hungry Webcams. It ran fine alongside a USB mouse I used while playing *Unreal Tournament*.

The Extigy uses more CPU power than the company's latest PCI card, the Audigy, but quite a bit less than the old Sound Blaster Live. Overall, I'm impressed and you should be, too.

AUDIO WITNESS

DirectSound3D CPU utilization, 44.1kHz, 16-bit, streaming, 32 voices (smaller is better)

VERDICT: ★★★★½

Simple setup and clean sound make for an upgrade that's easy on the ears, but beware of the drain on CPU power.

The Extigy takes over when it's plugged in and gracefully yields to existing audio if you unplug it.

Yamaha RP-U200 CAVIT External Audio Soundboard Receiver

Top-notch external sound board for all you audiophiles By William O'Neal

MANUFACTURER Yamaha
URL www.yamaha.com
PRICE $450

REQUIREMENTS Windows 98/2000/ME/XP with USB port, or Macintosh OS 9.1 or higher with USB port

It's easy to compare the Yamaha RP-U200 to Creative Labs' Sound Blaster Extigy: Both devices are essentially sound cards that interface with your PC (and in the case of the Yamaha unit, with Macs as well) via its USB port. And that's about where these two babies part ways. At exactly $300 more than the Extigy, the Yamaha RP-U200 has what it takes to turn any PC, Mac, or console system into a full-fledged home theater.

Described by Yamaha as an "external audio sound board," the RP-U200 boasts a plethora of inputs and outputs, including optical and coaxial in, optical out, and myriad RCA inputs. Basically, you'll be able to hook this thing up to any and all devices that you might choose.

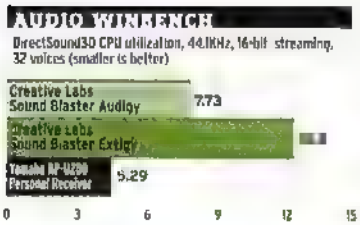
I was extremely curious to see how the RP-U200 would hold up under CPU testing, seeing as the Extigy used more CPU resources than the Audigy. So I hooked it up to my Power Rig (2.2GHz Pentium 4 with 512MB DDR RAM), and I was shocked: Its CPU usage was half that of the Extigy and more than 2 percent lower than that of the Audigy.

Thoroughly impressed, I decided to show the RP-U200 to a hardcore audiophile pal of mine who used to work at Dolby, and this is what he had to say about it: "The high point is the 24-bit/96kHz DAC—that's pro audio resolution/sampling. I'm sure we're not talking pro audio *performance*, but it means you don't have to down-convert any 96kHz stuff you may want to play with. A minor annoyance is that it's got digital coax/optical in but it only has optical out. Some power users may have a compatibility problem, but if Johnny just wants to play *Quake* with the volume cranked, there'll be no problem. Also, the subwoofer output is line level, so if you want to use it, you need a powered sub. Otherwise it looks like fun. Get me one, too!"

I'm inclined to agree with him. The amplifier delivers 14 watts RMS to each of the five channels, which isn't very much. Also, showing its true home audio pedigree, the RP-U200 is designed to hook up to standard home audio speakers, not necessarily the powered setups that most computer users are likely to have. You can hook it up to more traditional setups, but that might be overkill.

Criticisms aside, hardcore audiophiles will love the RP-U200's versatility. So if the hefty price tag doesn't scare you, this is a great sound solution that works with multiple platforms and devices.

If its hefty price tag doesn't scare you, the RP-U200 is a sound solution for multiple platforms and devices.



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Belkin Nostromo n30 Mouse and n50 Speedpad

Of mice and men

By Raphael Liberatore

PRODUCT: Belkin Nostromo n50 Speedpad
MANUFACTURER: Belkin
URL: www.belkin.com
PRICE: $39.99
RATING: ★★★★½
REQUIREMENTS: Pentium 233, Windows 98/ME/2000, 32MB RAM, 30MB hard drive space, CD-ROM drive, USB port

PRODUCT: Belkin Nostromo n30 Mouse
MANUFACTURER: Belkin
URL: www.belkin.com
PRICE: $45.99
RATING: ★★½☆☆
REQUIREMENTS: Pentium II 200, Windows 98/ME/2000, 32MB RAM, 50MB hard drive space, CD-ROM drive, USB port

When I heard that Belkin offered products for gamers, I was surprised to say the least. Let's get real: What makes a manufacturer of CAT 5 cables and other dull computer accessories think they can do justice to state-of-the-art gaming devices? Well, I had the opportunity to put the Belkin Nostromo n50 Speedpad and n30 Mouse to the ultimate test. TechTV's *Extended Play* crew recently visited my computer lair to film a group of die-hard gamers and industry folk play during our recent LAN Superbowl party. The result was unexpected. While not everything received stellar marks, most of us came away thinking Belkin might be on to something.

First, they didn't ignore the importance of good design and presentation. Both the Nostromo n50 Speedpad and n30 Mouse look cool enough to make any gamer proud to display them. The Speedpad looks like a gadget from *Mission Impossible*, while the mouse's futuristic design resembles something out of *Terminator 2*. The shape of the n50 Speedpad shows Belkin's ergonomic savvy, and it sports 10 keys, an eight-way directional pad, and throttle pad. There's even a removable hand rest for adjusting your grip. The Speedpad's design was a hit, although a few gamers felt the keys were spaced too far apart.

When it came to performance, the n30 Mouse didn't fare as well. It's bulky, like an overweight toad, and uses a throwback mouseball design instead of optics.

The scroll wheel also lacks a downward clicking direction. One of the n30's selling features is the Touchsense technology from Immersion, which supposedly creates rumbling vibrations during games and other standard mouse operations. But the promise is overstated. There are only a couple of Immersion effects, and we experienced lag and jumpy frame rates with the rumble effects enabled, especially during shooters like *Unreal Tournament* or *Aliens vs. Predator 2*. This is primarily due to the extra processing required to activate the internal servos and motors. But if you're a fan of *Black & White*, there's an upside. By using the n30, you can unlock a number of secrets throughout the game.

Installing the devices and getting the software running on any one of the 10 PCs at my house was hit or miss, depending on the computer. In most cases, it was far from a simple plug-and-play affair. Documentation was also sparse for the n30 Mouse. Luckily, the n50 Speedpad came with a plethora of gaming scripts. And if you couldn't find Speedpad scripts to meet your needs at Belkin's Website, the real charm was in making your own. Belkin did the Speedpad justice by making script building a user-friendly process. There's even a feature for setting up macro scripts, timing sequences, and shift states. Too cool.

All in all, we agreed that Belkin is a welcome addition to the gaming world. The Speedpad was the hands-down favorite, while the mouse didn't quite live up to its potential.

VERDICT

The n30 Mouse is standard mouse fare with rumble effects, but at a very hefty price. On the other hand, the Speedpad is a gamer's delight.

Straight From the Gamers' Mouths

Ten players chime in on the strengths and weaknesses of Belkin's gaming offerings.

"The Belkin mouse lacked a comfortable gaming grip, but the Speedpad is wicked cool. It's the best gaming device to come around in a long time." –Gingivitis

"The Speedpad rocks for *Diablo II*." –Zeph

"The Speedpad is very comfortable to use, and the hand rest had a natural feel. My only complaint is that the keys are so far apart." –Mudgrim

"I prefer the Logitech optical mouse or Microsoft Explorer. The n30 Mouse sits too high." –Sensei

"The last thing I want to experience is rumble effects in a non-game environment. The n30 is plain creepy." –Lu Tseing

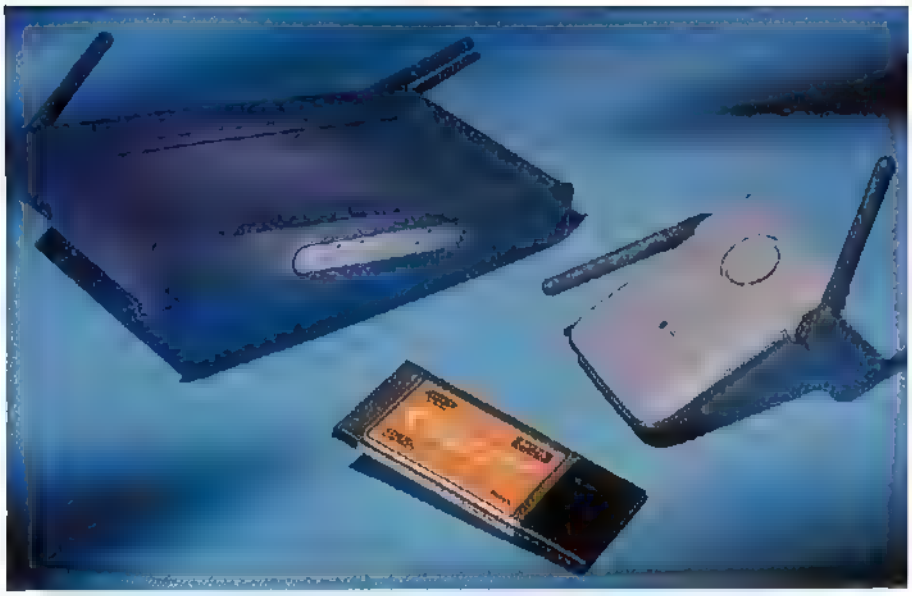
"The mouse reminds me of Mr. Toad's wild ride. The Speedpad, however...I want one now!" –Bouncing Betty

"I became everyone's whipping boy in *RtCW* from the lag I experienced using the n30's rumble effects. How do you shut them off?" –Sir Flash

"The Speedpad took getting used to, but it's a welcome tool for any serious player looking for that extra edge." –Rekko

"Setting up Speedpad scripts is easier than I expected. I was up and running in less than 30 seconds." –Crimson Clover

"The Nostromo mouse drivers PK'd my Logitech mouse drivers." –MooJuice



Belkin Wireless Cable/DSL Gateway Router

Wirelessly connect PCs to each other and the Net By Ken Feinstein

Manufacturer: Belkin
URL: www.belkin.com
Price: $250

System: Windows 98/2000/ME/XP

We've been hearing about home networks for years with any number of technologies promising to make this dream a reality. But more and more, it's looking like wireless, specifically the 802.11b standard, will finally bring all of your PCs together. Belkin's Wireless Cable/DSL Gateway Router acts as a single hub for your wired and wireless networks, letting your PCs communicate with each other and share broadband Internet access.

The Belkin Gateway installs easily, with a detailed printed manual providing guidance. Just connect the router to your cable or DSL modem, and then either hook your PC to one of its three Ethernet ports or just use your PC's wireless adapter. A straightforward Web interface lets you configure the router, plus there are two configuration apps on the included CD-ROM. Importantly, the router supports both 64-bit and 128-bit encryption for wireless communications, and configuring encryption is as simple as setting a password on the router and on your PC.

Once configured, the router worked flawlessly. All of our PCs were able to access the Internet simultaneously, seamlessly sharing the broadband connection. The wireless capability let us roam around the house with a laptop PC, never losing our connection to the Internet; we were even able to go outside and sit on the porch without skipping a beat. In our testing, the router's two wireless antennae provided good range, though it's important to note that the number and construction of the walls between you and your router affect the range as much as actual distance does.

Since the 802.11b standard offers up to 11Mbps of bandwidth, and the average broadband connection maxes out at only 1.5Mbps, there's plenty of headroom for playing networked games. However, like all gateway routers, the Belkin's ability to work as a firewall and protect your network from hackers also keeps it from working with some networked games. The Belkin offers two ways around this. First, you can manually enter the port numbers used by specific games, or you can specify one (and only one) PC to be outside of the firewall in the demilitarized zone, giving it universal compatibility for games but also exposing it to hackers.

Overall, the Belkin Cable/DSL Gateway Router provides an excellent way to share a broadband Internet connection among PCs scattered throughout a home or office. But my frank advice would be to shop around for the best deal you can get on a wireless router. It seems that all of the ones from major vendors offer similar features and functionality.

VERDICT: ★★★★½

An easy way to build a wireless network and share a Net connection

WIL POWER

By William O'Neal

Say, my Nizzle, That FireWire's the Shizzle!

Last summer I visited Creative Labs to see what they had coming down the pike. Creative Labs PR hack Phil O'Shaughnessy led me to a conference room to check out the as-yet unreleased Audigy line of Sound Blaster sound cards.

Beyond the typical talk about the Audigy's technical superiority to other sound cards, Creative went to special lengths to point out the IEEE 1394 FireWire ports on the Audigy. This perplexed me. At the time I was running Hercules' GameTheater XP on all of my machines; I loved the fact that the break-out box added six more USB ports to my computer. The only FireWire products that I had were a camcorder, an external hard drive, and a CD-RW drive (all of which were sitting in their boxes).

Here I am many months later, and the Audigy cards have taken over all of my machines. While I don't use FireWire to connect PCs for LAN gaming, I am using a FireWire CD-RW drive. But what's more interesting is that I use my FireWire drives to transfer files between old computers and new ones. You see, Windows XP Professional, which I use on my productivity machines, and Windows XP Home, which comes on all of the machines that I test, don't like each other very much (save the nasty letters, Microsoft). Getting an XP Home machine and an XP Professional machine to speak to each other over a corporate or home network is a pain in the ass. But sharing files between these two flavors of XP with a FireWire cable is a piece of cake.

This month I reviewed Toshiba's latest Satellite laptop, and I wanted to hear how MP3s and WMAs sounded on the Harmon/Kardon sound system. Who wants to rip 10 gigabytes of music? So I connected the Toshiba to my desktop machine and made the laptop a networked machine in the desktop's My Network Places; 30 minutes later, all of my music was on the laptop.

I officially apologize to Creative for doubting them. As a FireWire devotee, all I can say is, "My bad."

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How To: Throw a LAN Party

By Joel Durham

So you're tired of Internet lag but you still have a deep-seated urge to humiliate other people. There's only one answer: Throw a LAN party! Hosting a successful frag fest is easier than you think—just follow these steps and you'll be on your way toward lag-less multiplayer mayhem.

STEP 1

PLAN AHEAD Whether you're having a few folks over for a casual evening of popcorn and fragging or organizing a massive gathering of gibbers, take a few minutes to hash out the details. What games will you be playing? Does someone's house have enough room for everybody, or do you need to rent a banquet room? Will you be playing games that require special controllers, like flight sims, racing sims, or mecha titles? Make sure you inform your guests of the itinerary so they come prepared with the necessary controllers, games, and other equipment.

STEP 2

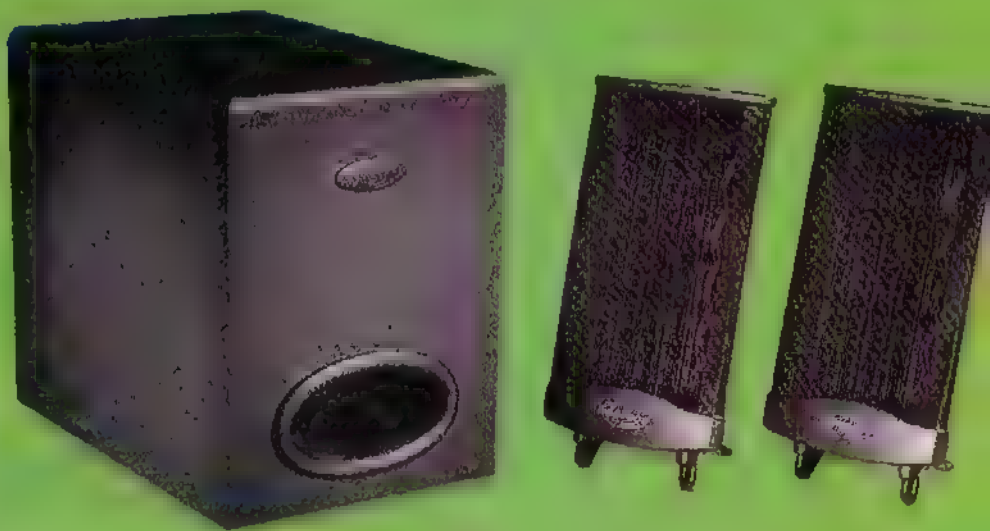
LAY OUT THE LOCATION This shouldn't be much of a chore for small gatherings—you can probably set up on the fly. For large parties, though, it's best to lay the infrastructure before the guests arrive. First, decide how you're going to lay out the network. Will you use hubs and switches, or will you go wireless? For small groups, base the arrangement on the equipment the participants already have: For instance, if most of the gang has 10/100 NICs for a broadband Internet connection, a 10/100 autosensing hub (or several stackable hubs) with enough ports for everyone will be sufficient. For large parties, use 10/100 switches to cut down the network traffic, or go with an 802.11x wireless access point. Provide enough space at desks and tables for each PC, and if you're not wireless, be sure to have network cables for everybody.

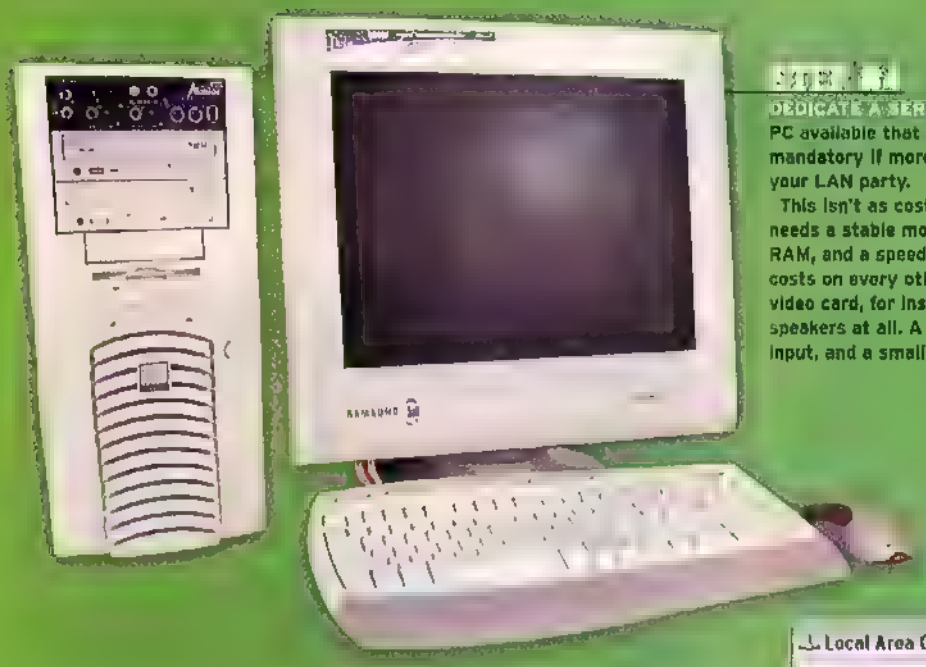
STEP 3

PREP THE PCS Each participant's computer should be fitted with an appropriate network adapter. To minimize technical concerns, you should also have everyone install the latest drivers for their equipment and the most recent DirectX version.

Besides their PCs and peripherals, you should instruct guests to bring their own power strips, game software, and whatever else they desire. Everyone should bring a set of headphones, too; with speakers, the noise level can get out of control, plus it's possible for opponents to pick up telltale tactical tidbits from a loud competitor.

As guests arrive, have them set up and power on their PCs, plugging in necessary network cables.





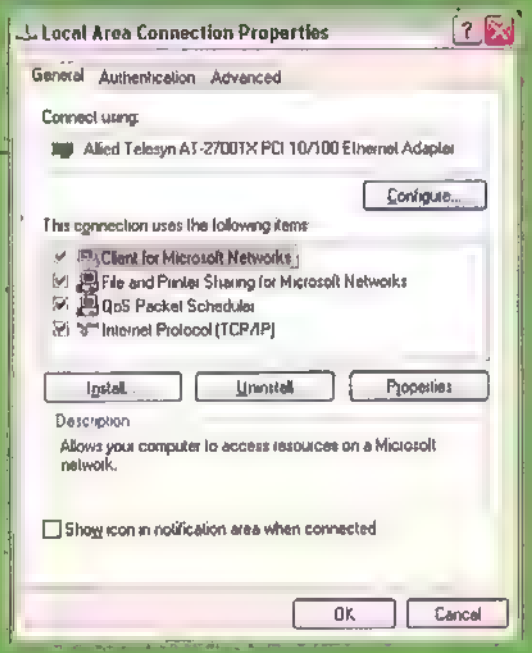
DEDICATE A SERVER Make every effort to have a high-end PC available that can act as a dedicated server. This is mandatory if more than six or seven people participate in your LAN party.

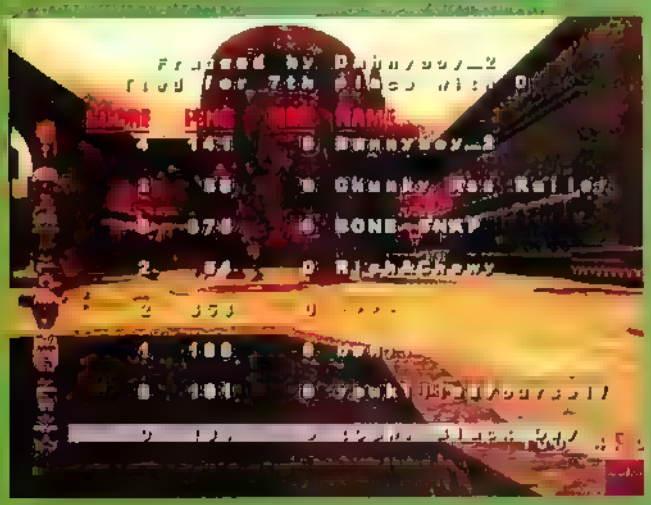
This isn't as costly an endeavor as it sounds. A server needs a stable motherboard, a fast processor, plenty of RAM, and a speedy network interface, but you can cut costs on every other device. It doesn't need a high-end video card, for instance, and it doesn't need a sound card or speakers at all. A generic mouse and keyboard will do for input, and a small, cheap monitor is a sufficient display.

STEP #5

CONFIGURE THE NETWORK Whether the group is running Windows 98, XP, or anything in between, getting Microsoft PCs to talk to each other over a network is fairly simple. Have each participant invoke the network properties interface by firing up the Control Panel and choosing Networks. Alternately, XP users can run the network setup wizard. The interface varies from one version of Windows to the next, but each has common attributes. In the list of network components, make sure the following are present: Client for Microsoft Networks and the protocols TCP/IP and IPX/SPX (which a few games still need). Also, pick a workgroup name (like LANFEST) and have the players configure their network settings for it. Be sure each participant's PC has a unique name to avoid conflicts. Do the same for the server.

You can test connectivity by adding the file- and printer-sharing service on the server and then sharing a directory without using password protection. Have everyone invoke the Network Neighborhood or My Network Places applets and look for the server or navigate directly to it by entering its network path (//<server name>/<folder name>). If some PCs can see it and others can't, then chances are the ones that can't are misconfigured or improperly connected. If *nobody* can see it, make sure the server is properly configured and connected.





STEP #6

FRAG AWAY! Kick off the festivities with a game that's known to be stable over a network, like *Quake III: Arena*. If you start with a new title and it has a multiplayer bug, you might blame it on your network and end up in a mess of unnecessary troubleshooting. Once you've verified that everyone can play, the rest is up to you. Now get fragging!

Tech Medics

You've got questions; we've got answers **By William O'Neal**

"First You Get the Money, Then the Power, Then the Respect"

Hey Wil, I'm building my dream machine and it's going to have an AMD XP 2000+ CPU, DVD-ROM drive, CD-RW drive, and at least two system fans. Will a 320-watt power supply provide enough juice to support all of these?

Scott Lewis

I just got a machine from Falcon Northwest: Athlon XP 2100+, yadda, yadda, yadda. It came with a 430-watt power supply. While your machine should be just fine with the 320-watt power supply that you mention (my 2.4GHz Pentium 4 Power Rig has a 350-watt supply, and it's plenty quick), the fact that cooling nuts like Falcon and VoodooPC go with bigger power supplies means something. In other words, get a bigger power supply if you can swing the extra money.

Thus Speaketh the Master . . . Dave

I'm looking for a sound card with some nice-sounding MIDI effects. I have a Sound Blaster X-Gamer right now, and it has the best MIDI sound realism and quality that I have run across, but I still want better. I know that MIDI isn't a big deal to most gamers, but those of us who attempt to compose music on our computers tend to use it a good deal.

Ryan Stemen

Dave Salvator likes to think of himself as a musician, so I sent your query his way. Here's what he had to say:

SoundFonts. The trick is to have a ton of system memory, because Creative stores the samples there. I've heard pretty impressive SoundFonts, and there are several sites where they're available for free. In terms of other hardware, I can't think of any cards that sound decidedly better than the Sound Blaster Live. To get really professional-sounding patches, consider an external tone generator from a company like Yamaha, which would set you back anywhere from $600 to $1,500. Both make synth "brains" without the physical keyboard, and these modules are often rack-mountable. Yamaha's VL70M is a pretty good example of this, and costs roughly $600. Their MU50 has fewer features/patches and runs about $360. Go to www.musiciansfriend.com or www.sweetwater.com to check out gear. –Dave

You Know, You Can Play *Max Payne* on an Xbox

I'm working on upgrading my computer. It's an 800MHz Pentium III Dell, with 384MB of PC133 SDRAM, a 20GB hard drive, and an onboard video card. My budget is kind of low, and I need to upgrade my motherboard and video card. I was wondering if you had any suggestions on what to buy. I don't want the best stuff, but I would like to be able to play *Max Payne*, *Return to Castle Wolfenstein*, and *Serious Sam*.

Thenamelsbam

It sounds like your current motherboard doesn't have an available AGP slot. If that's the case, you do need to upgrade your motherboard. I take it your CPU is a Socket 370. Check out ASUS' TUA266 motherboard. It supports Socket 370 and your PC133 SDRAM, and it boasts an AGP slot. After that, get the best GeForce card you can afford.

Which Motherboard Should I Buy?

I'd like to compliment you on being the coolest guy on the CGW staff. But the real reason I'm writing is to get your recommendations on parts for the gaming rig I'm building. I've already lined up an XTasy GeForce4 Titanium, 512MB PC-SDRAM, an optical mouse, and an AMD Athlon 1800+ processor. However, I'd like your input as to which motherboard I should get. Also, where can I pick up a case/power supply?

Phil

Thanks for the kudos, Phil. If I were you, I'd get an ASUS A7N266 motherboard and an Antec SX-635 case with the 350-watt power supply. You can probably find 'em both at shopper.cnet.com.

ILLUSTRATION BY MICHAEL SLACH

Killer Rigs

The best recipe for building your ultimate gaming machine By William O'Neal

This month's Power Rig is the same as last month's, with the exception of the 2.4GHz Pentium 4 that Intel recently sent me and the shipping version of VisionTek's 128MB GeForce4 Ti 4600 graphics card. As the performance chart shows, I've started testing with 3DMark2001 Second Edition from MadOnion.com as well as *Serious Sam: The Second Encounter*.

Like its predecessor, 3DMark2001 SE uses Remedy Entertainment's MAX-FX technology, but now it offers support for DirectX 8.1. I decided to start using *Serious Sam: The Second Encounter* because it taxes the system in ways that the 100-year-old *Quake III: Arena* can't. And of course, since I work for Ziff Davis, I'm still using 3DWinBench 2000.

I ran all of these tests with antialiasing turned off (Brian Burke from Nvidia, feel free to call me. NOW!) so that my test results would be easier for others to understand. *Quake III: Arena* at 1600x1200x32 with all the details and textures turned on ran at the superfast rate of 132 frames per second. You'll also notice that *Serious Sam* at 1600x1200x32 with all the details and textures turned on yielded 49 frames per second. Although this is lower than the other games' scores, it is still impressive.

I've been getting a lot of mail from people chastising me for going with the Cambridge speakers instead of Klipsch speakers, but until you've heard the Cambridges, you don't know what you're missing.

Also, many of you are curious about why I'm using the Pentium 4 rather than the Athlon XP 2100+. Well, it comes down to my tests: The Pentium, while several hundred dollars more, is plain faster.

By the Numbers

	Score
Quake III: Arena 1024x768x16	215
Quake III: Arena 1024x768x32	213
Quake III: Arena 1600x1200x32	132
Unreal Tournament 1024x768x16	65
Expendable 16-bit	105
Expendable 32-bit	104
Re-Volt 1024x768x16	293
Re-Volt 1024x768x32	293
Serious Sam: TSE 1024x768x32	101
Serious Sam: TSE 1600x1200x32	49
3DWinMark 2000	316
3DMark2001 SE 1024x768x32	10542

COMPONENT	MANUFACTURER	PRICE
CPU	2.4GHz Pentium 4	$600
Memory	512MB Crucial PC2100 DDR RAM	$150
Graphics Card	VisionTek 128MB GeForce4 Ti 4600	$400
Motherboard	Intel D845BG	$150
Case	Antec SX-635	$100
3.5" Floppy Drive	Teac	$20
Hard Drive	30GB IBM Deskstar 7200 RPM	$150
CD-RW Drive	Plextor 24/10/40	$175
DVD-ROM Drive	Pioneer DVD500-M 16/40 ATAPI	$75
Monitor	22" NEC MultiSync FE1250+ (black)	$700
Keyboard	Microsoft Internet Keyboard Pro	$40
Mouse	Wireless IntelliMouse Explorer	$65
Sound Card	Sound Blaster Audigy Gamer	$100
Speakers	Cambridge SoundWorks MegaWorks 510D	$400
Joystick	Saitek Cyborg USB Gold Stick	$40
Gamepad	Microsoft SideWinder GamePad USB	$25
Operating System	Windows XP Home Edition	$200
TOTAL		$3,390

Until you've heard the Cambridges, you don't know what you're missing.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY ARNOLD TOSETO

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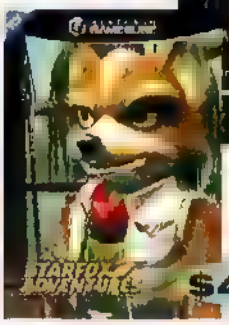

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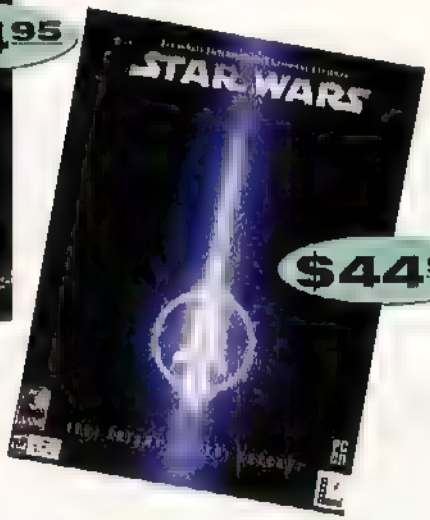

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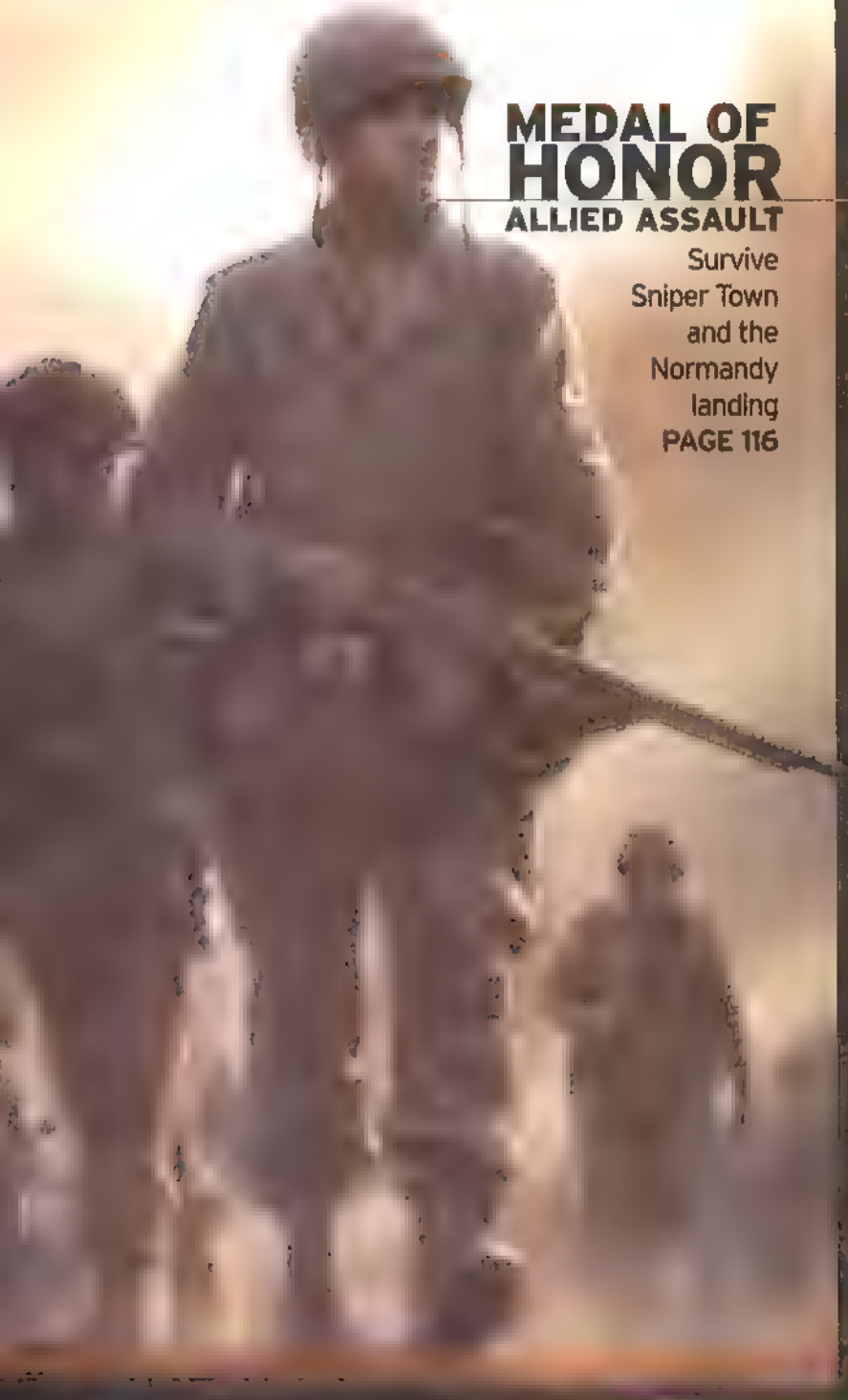
Gamer's Edge

Winning for dummies Edited by Thierry Nguyen

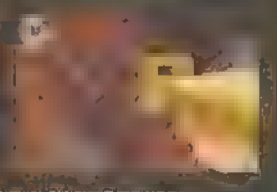


MEDAL OF HONOR
ALLIED ASSAULT

Survive Sniper Town and the Normandy landing
PAGE 116

Dirtiest Trick o' the Month

Ah, the dirty trick has been revived. Looks like it took a copy of *Medal of Honor* to inspire a response to our call for better, more current tricks. Ironically, the best trick we got is a lead on how to get the perfect sniping position in *Medal of Honor* deathmatch! Here's the word from David "Dragon" Cohen:

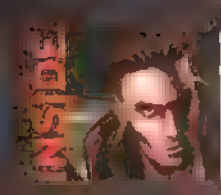


This is a cool cheat because you don't need another person to help you get up to this spot in southern France (MOHDM1). All you need to do is go up to the balcony and look over the edge. You can either jump onto the trim to the left and follow it to the spot shown in the screenshots, or jump to the right and get access to previously unreachable balconies. The spot shown here is the best, because people rarely look up that high when running through that part of the map. Most of the time, they come through the awning directly below your feet and BAM!!!! They never see it coming. SMG and rockets are the best for this position. One very important note: Once in this position, you need to [illegible] the reverse key or you will fall. Happy sniping!

—Dragon

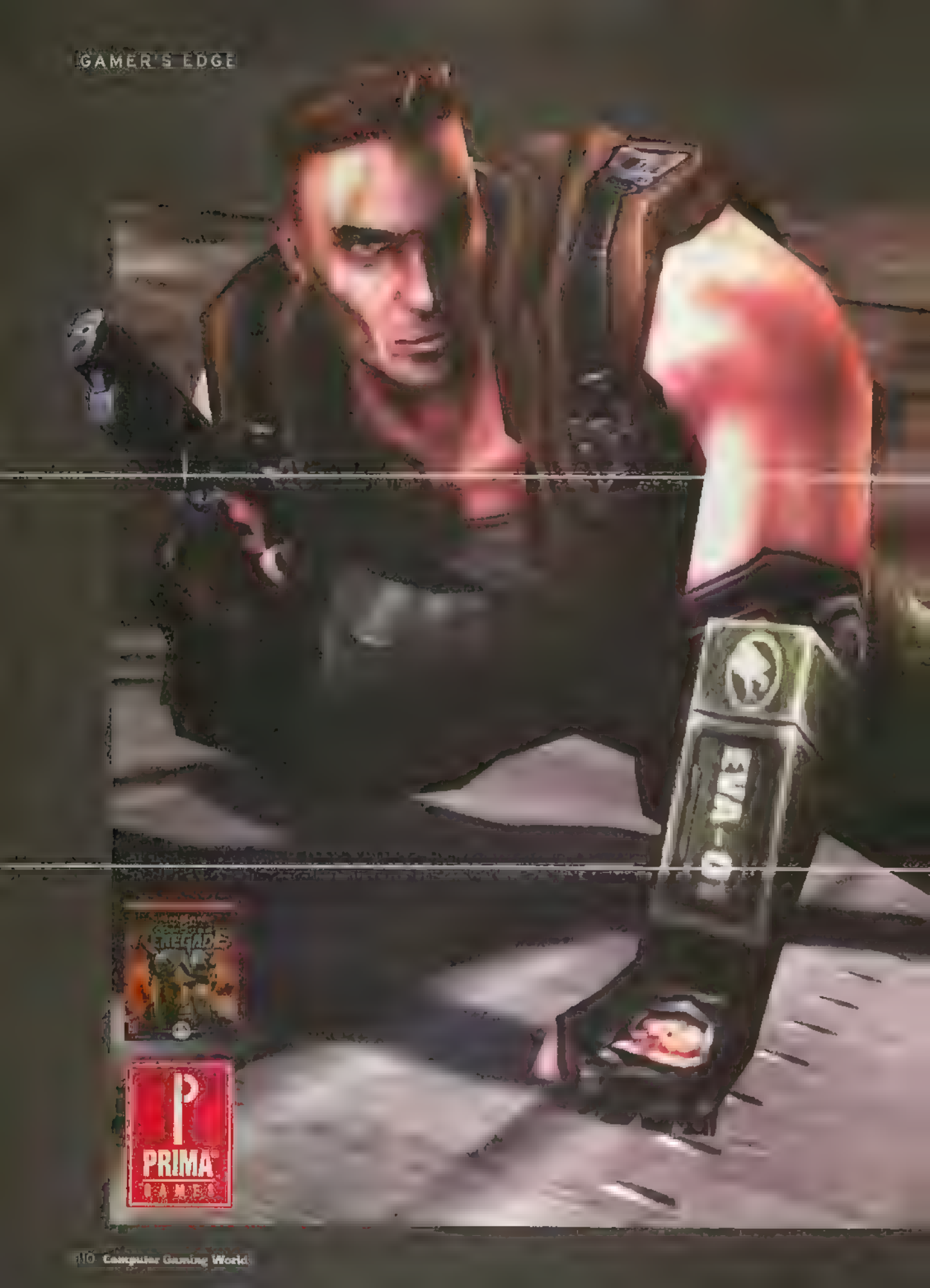
Well, Dragon, for pointing out a devious place to sit and snipe those yanks/jerries with either sniper rifle or rocket, you get yourself a copy of *Medal of Honor* [illegible] the wealth to your friends.

WE HAVE ONE LAST COPY OF *MEDAL OF HONOR* AVAILABLE. WRITE IN A GREAT DIRTY TRICK TO WIN THIS CLASSIC SHOOTER.



C&C: RENEGADE
Prima, CGW, and Westwood Studios pick apart the choice levels.
PAGE 110

SID MEIER'S SIMGOLF
Part II: Showing you the ropes on building greens
PAGE 121


EVA-0
RENEGADE
PRIMA
GAMES

An exclusive strategy guide from Prima Games and *Computer Gaming World*. Plus: multiplayer tips from Westwood Studios, the makers of *C&C: Renegade*.

C&C RENEGADE

MISSION 5: DEADLY REUNION

The town is under siege, the inhabitants are in revolt, and your old squadmates are trapped in various locations. Havoc to the rescue. Liberate each Dead 6 member and meet them at the cathedral for a showdown.

You begin in the southwest area of town, facing west. Your first primary objective is to locate Hotwire in the southwestern sector. Just as you hear Hotwire's call for help, a flamethrower trooper rushes your position. Your back is against a wall, so you have to nail him before he gets within blast range. Stand your ground and fight any forces that rush or parachute into view. Before moving on, discharge a rocket soldier firing from a balcony ahead. After he's toast, move forward. A side alley to the south holds precious provisions. Use them or save them until you're really in need. Ahead, an overturned truck has spilled several items of interest. Just beyond that, Nod officers drop by rope from a second-story window. Move forward until you see the light tank in the square ahead. Above it, on a balcony to the southwest, a rocket soldier causes additional problems. After you have neutralized

both threats, venture into the square. From a high window in the south, flamethrower troopers drop from a window.

Next, look for a boarded-up area in the west of the square: Hotwire is holed up here. As you get closer to her, turn toward the southeast. Pump rockets into the armored personnel carrier and Nod buggy down the street, and then finish off any additional troops attacking from that direction. Now you can work in peace.

Approach the barricade to talk to your trapped comrade, and then fire a couple of rockets into the barricade in order to blow it open. When the smoke clears, go in to say hi and complete your first primary objective. Collect anything that you need from the large stockpile of weapons and power-ups before leaving.

Finding Gunner in the Town Square

Travel southeast toward the truck-wreckage blocking the street. As you near the barrier, you receive a new primary objective: Rendezvous with Gunner in the town square ahead.

An alley leads left (north). This is the other end of the alley that you bypassed before. Your reward is a stash of health and armor, but you have to fight your way out once you've nabbed them. Return to the street and continue southeast toward the wrecked trucks. As you approach the trucks, you meet a new friend: the flame tank. Backpedal as you fire something strong at it; don't fight this one close up. Move on when the coast is clear.

Just outside of the town square, keep your eyes peeled for a stash of weapons and power-ups to the left. Strain to see the light tank bombarding the village square, and then fire rockets into it from a safe distance.

Right about this time, you hear word from the Resistance asking for your help in securing the square (your first secondary objective). Enter the square and look northeast for the two rocket soldier officers on balconies. Fire on the other troops as well, and continue as reinforcements arrive by parachute. Once Nod troops surrender the square, your secondary mission objective is complete. Look behind the building to the south for a stash of [illegible].

Pocket the armor, health, and weaponry on the first floor and proceed upstairs. As you climb, you get your next primary objective: Locate Deadeye inside the Fancy Inn on the east side.

Finding Deadeye

Be ready to fight as you hit the head of the stairs—flamethrower soldiers storm in the door. Peek out that door and fire a rocket at the gun emplacement to the northeast. After two flamethrower troopers parachute in, carefully venture out onto the bridge.

Look north across the water and disable the light tank firing at the rooftops. Dislodge a rocket soldier from a balcony to the northwest. Cross the bridge but stop before you get to the intersection ahead; a whole squadron of flamethrower soldiers comes roaring around the corner.

Approach the corner slowly and peek around to the southeast to pop a rocket soldier officer on a balcony. Turn to the north and erase the Black Hand on the balcony before continuing down the street.

At the end of the street, you find a cargo truck and (to the left) a gun emplacement that you can use if you like. Fire at all of the opposition down the street to the west before you start searching around inside the truck for collectibles.

Head west. Peek inside the garage to the right to meet more of the Resistance. Check behind the garage for supplies before continuing to the northwest down the street. Rescue the kneeling Resistance fighter from the trio of Nod officers. After accepting her congratulations, keep going northwest.

From behind the tank wreckage comes an armored personnel carrier. Try to breach its hull before it can offload its crew.

When you have vanquished the enemy troops, duck into the alcove to the left. Collect all the items you need before talking to the Resistance fighter. He wants you to follow him. Do so, firing on the gun emplacement and any other enemies you meet en route. Eventually, the Resistance fighter ducks into a building; follow him upstairs.

Collect any supplies you need and talk to the Resistance fighter who has the chain gun. He asks you if you will escort them to a nearby crashed Nod transport helicopter. This is your next secondary objective; Get them to the helicopter alive. If any of them dies, you will lose the objective. Therefore, run ahead of them downstairs and mow down the squad of chem troopers rushing into the house before going outside.

When you hit the street, wheel around to the right and fire at the rocket launcher-toting Mendoza standing atop the wall near the helicopter. When he's nearly deceased, he flees like the coward he is.

It's now safe to approach the helicopter. When all the Resistance fighters have arrived, you've successfully satisfied your next secondary objective.

Collect what you need from the helicopter's cargo. Approach the barricades but retreat as soon as you get a transmission from the Resistance. You're given a new secondary objective (make contact with an escaped prisoner in a house nearby), but press on with your primary concern.

Several Nod fighters are about to drop on your head. Backpedal and fill the air with fire and lead. Behind the ground forces comes

Clear out anyone who drops in before you start searching for Hotwire.

TIP: Visit Gunner in the bunker near the fountain to register your second primary objective. Pick up anything you need in his hideout and go into the door of the building to the north.

Use your tank to push the vehicles out of the way if it has ammo to spare.

massive flame tank. Lay explosives and continue moving down the street.

Look for an open portal to the left and creep very carefully up the steps to the second floor. On the way, you get word of yet another secondary objective: Assassinate the six Nod engineers who are working on an obelisk in the park.

There's a view of the construction site through the window ahead, but don't get too close to the window. Arm the sniper rifle, stand out of sight of the Nod buggy, and ventilate the rocket officer soldier near the cargo truck. Next, take aim at the left side of the obelisk. Drop the engineers as they emerge one by one. When all six are permanently unemployed, the secondary objective is fulfilled.

Pick up the armor upgrade as you leave and go back to the street. Continue south and jack the Nod light tank to your left. Your next stop is a doorway on the right, a bit farther down the street. Block the door as much as possible with the tank before going in (leaving yourself room to enter, of course).

Go upstairs to meet the escaped prisoner, or what's left of him. Tiberium exposure has turned him into an initiate. Pick up the data disc and talk to the escapee's brother, standing nearby. He offers information and an experimental weapon his brother stole: a personal Ion cannon. Pick it up quickly—you're about to have company.

The initiate transforms into a visceroid (let the brother deal with that), and several Nod officers and flamethrower infantry rush the door. Fortunately, the parked tank prevents them from entering, giving you time to get the drop on them.

Climb up the steps to get a very challenging secondary objective.

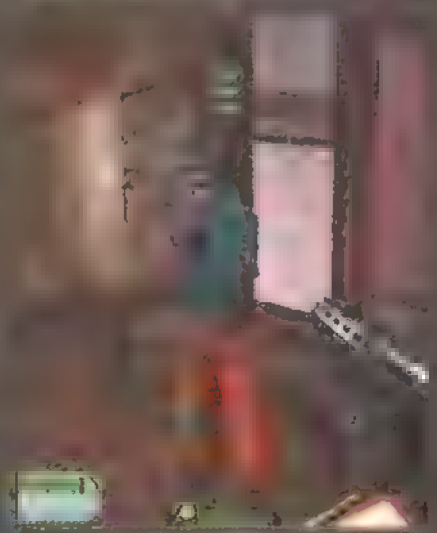
The fancy inn is undefended once you eliminate the armor units parked outside.

Don't take your eyes off Deadeye until he's safely inside.

It's a trap! Be ready to fight or ignore the technician's plaintive cries.

Hop into the driver's seat of the tank and head east. Carefully take out a pesky pair of Nod buggies down the block and bull your way forward. At the end of the block, turn your guns toward the building on the left and watch the rooftops and upper windows. Give the rocket soldier officer, Black Hand, and the clown car's worth of chem troopers a taste of your tank shells. After a brief respite, Black Hand snipers begin to appear on the southern roofline. Search for supplies and talk to the Resistance fighters in the shed before continuing on your way.

In the next square, snipers are lined up across the roofs. Ground them all, especially the rocket soldier on the northern roofline. A voice calls for help. The voice is coming from a Nod technician in the southwest corner. It's a trap: When you go to help, Mendoza pops up to the south with a rocket volley, and a cadre of chem warriors parachute in behind you. That's what



Deadeye waits for you upstairs. Talk to him and run ahead to escort him to the cathedral.

you get for helping people.

Continue east down the street. Fire rockets at the Nod buggy down the way and stand fast for a line of charging cham warriors. Pick off the snipers on the roofs above one by one.

Around this time, you get your next primary objective, which is to contact Patch when you get to the cathedral. On the next block, the Fancy Inn comes into view on the right side. Shatter the light tank, the APC on the front lawn, and the other APC around the back before you go to the main door and walk in.

Go upstairs and head to the east to find Deadeye. Pick up his extra sniper rifle and have a little talk.

Rush to the Cathedral

Deadeye makes for the cathedral. Unlike the other Dead 6s, however, Deadeye needs to be escorted by you. If he is killed, your mission fails. Try to stay in front of him at all times.

As the road turns toward the north, you hear another transmission coming from the Resistance. However, this time it's from a different voice. The leader of the Resistance, Babushka, has been captured. Your new secondary objective is to liberate her.

Dispose of the rocket soldier sitting in the high window and "borrow" the waiting flame tank. Unload ammo on the armored personnel carrier ahead and on anyone who tries to escape it.

As you crest the hill, another flame tank comes the other way. Burn it out quickly before it roasts Deadeye. Moving on, get rid of the Nod buggy and rush through the area before the sniping Mendoza is able to get a bead on Deadeye.

Climb the streets until you arrive at the cathedral. Once Deadeye has safely reached the interior, continue west to find the Resistance leader.

The Babushka Detour

At the far wall, turn left. Exit the tank, go through the door to the south, and creep upstairs. Execute the Nod officer and Black Hand before they can shoot Babushka. When she is safe, have a word with her before collecting supplies and returning to your tank. Backtrack to the cathedral and head upstairs to find your comrades.

The Black Hand Closes In...

Final Assault

Find Patch and talk with him to satisfy your primary objective. A massive Black Hand heavy weapons assault team with Apache air support and mobile artillery ground support is coming your way. All you have to do to satisfy your final primary objective is survive.

You can either venture outside or choose to shoot from the windows and doors. There are plenty of targets for you, including incoming mobile artillery. Once you've turned away all Nod forces, the attack and the mission are complete.

The inside scoop on being the sneakiest commando around

You can always ask some anonymous yahoo how to be a great commando, taking down Hands of Nod and jacking stealth tanks at the drop of a hat. But we decided to go with the insider view and ask the one guy who lives and breathes this game, Westwood community manager Cliff Hicks, about the real deal on commanding and conquering.

Fundamentals

Renegade can be something of an overwhelming multiplayer experience your first time, so first I'll walk you through some fundamentals and then move on to advanced strategies and tactics.

Rule #1: Always protect your harvester!

It might seem like a little thing, but each time the harvester returns to the refinery, everyone on your team gets a cash dump. If your harvester is destroyed, a new one will be built automatically, but it has to go back to the field and begin the gathering process all over again. And while your team is waiting for the harv to roll its slow ass back to the tiberium field, your opponents (who wisely guarded their harvester) are getting cash and buying all the expensive toys.

Rule #2: Defend the base!

Every building in your base is essential. Without the refinery, your cash income is severely limited. Without your power plant, your base defenses are offline and the price of everything is doubled.

Without your barracks or Hand of Nod, you can't change characters and get better weapons. Without your weapons factory or airstrip, you can't build vehicles. Each building is important, and losing any one of them can hamper you. If everyone is out on the assault and no one's watching the base, a good infiltration team can sneak in and ruin your whole day.

Rule #3: Engineers are your friends.

You might think the engineer class is full of weaklings—only a pistol for a weapon, not a lot of health, not a lot of armor. Walking target, right? Wrong. The engineer is perhaps the most flexible class in the game. Any tank assault team should have a few engineers backing them up, repairing the tanks even as they take damage.

Engineers can also repair other troops with the repair gun, so two engineers repairing some tanks can also repair each other. (The beta testers commonly refer to repairing as "toasting," so don't be surprised to see people saying, "Toast our harv!")

On top of this, the Engineers carry a good amount of C4. The advanced Engineer class (Technician on Nod, Hotwire on GDI) is the only character class that can take down a building by themselves without the aid of a vehicle. If two engineers can sneak into a building and chuck all of their C4 onto the building's master control terminal, those weaklings will leave you with a charred hulk of a building in no time.

Engineers are also the only ones who can disarm C4, proximity mines, and beacons, and they get big points for doing so. They can also repair buildings that are damaged but not ones that are destroyed.

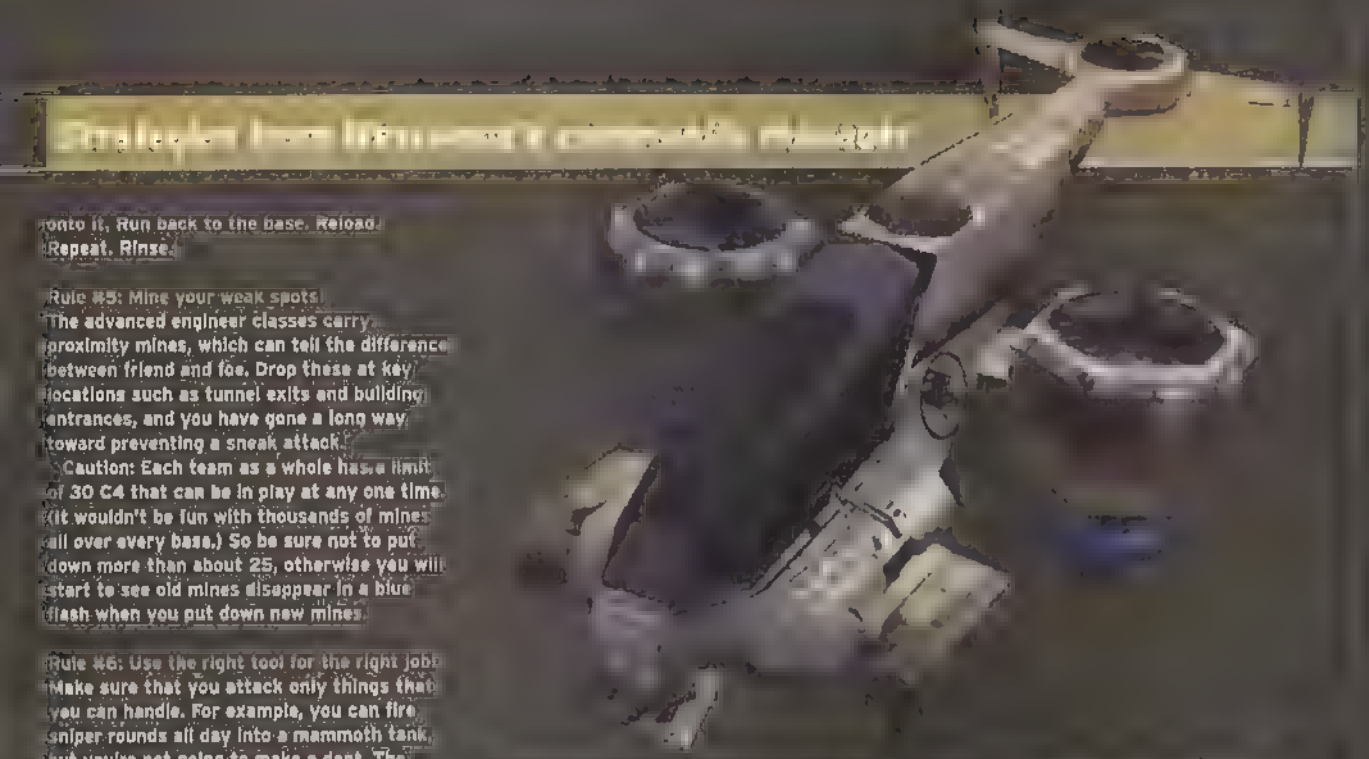
Hit the J key to get a status report on your buildings from anywhere; if you see that a building is damaged, then repair it. If a building is destroyed (at zero health), however, you needn't bother. Once a building is gone, it's gone.

Rule #4: C4 sticks to anything!

Remember: Every player carries a block of timed C4, and timed C4 doesn't disappear when you die—it still counts to 30 and then blows up if it isn't disarmed. So if you're going to die in the immediate future, pitch your C4. Toss it against enemy players, tanks, or even the ground.

And if a tank rush is holding your front door, a few suicide runs could be in order.

Run up to the tanks with your C4 in hand. You'll have to be quick, but usually a nimble-footed soldier can dodge tank fire if they're approaching from the side or back. Run up close to the tank and toss your C4



onto it. Run back to the base. Reload. Repeat. Rinse.

Rule #5: Mine your weak spots
The advanced engineer classes carry proximity mines, which can tell the difference between friend and foe. Drop these at key locations such as tunnel exits and building entrances, and you have gone a long way toward preventing a sneak attack.

Caution: Each team as a whole has a limit of 30 C4 that can be in play at any one time. (It wouldn't be fun with thousands of mines all over every base.) So be sure not to put down more than about 25, otherwise you will start to see old mines disappear in a blue flash when you put down new mines.

Rule #6: Use the right tool for the right job
Make sure that you attack only things that you can handle. For example, you can fire sniper rounds all day into a mammoth tank, but you're not going to make a dent. The character class screen is divided into four columns: The far left column is anti-infantry, the next is antivehicle, and then comes the specialist class (they tend to be a good balance of antivehicle/anti-infantry, but not as strong against either as the dedicated classes). That last little person in the corner by himself is of the advanced engineer class.

Also, remember that all the character classes at the main screen are free, so if you're just starting a game and you want to get good points, get a grenadier or flamethrower and go hunt the enemy harvester.

Likewise, if you're having problems with snipers controlling the battlefield, hop into a vehicle and go out sniper hunting!

Rule #7: Work together
Renegade is a team game, and those who go it alone will have a much tougher time than those who work in small squads. Groups of two to five players working together have a much better success rate than those players who think they can win the war single-handedly. A pair of snipers is good; a pair of snipers that is supported by an engineer and a few antivehicle characters is a whole heckuva lot better.

Rule #8: Disarm the beacons!
The minute you see that sky changing, it means a beacon is down. If the sky is turning red, then a Nod nuke beacon is down. If it's turning black and you're starting to see rain, then a GDI ion cannon beacon is down. If you aren't on the team the beacon is on, finding and disarming the beacon might be considered a good idea. A beacon right next to a building will guarantee an instant kill on the building, so bring some advanced engineers and a couple of people to guard them, or your base may be thoroughly cooked.

Rule #9: Be devious!
Here are a few nasty tricks that have come up over the course of the beta test.

The suicide bomber: Put prox mines and remote C4 all over a base class, and have them run at a tank rush for great fun.

The sniper sneak: Sneak up on GDI snipers with the Nod stealth trooper and stick C4 on their backs. Hilarity ensues.

The concealed beacon: One of the best places to hide a beacon is between the refinery and its attached silo. You're in a dark corner that's easily defendable.

The tank-jacker: When you see an enemy hop out of his vehicle to repair it himself (never a good idea), run over and hop into it before he sees you. Run him over for good measure.

Cutting the cash flow: While getting the refinery is often tricky, if your opponent's airstrip or weapons factory is gone, then go after their harvester instead. It won't cut all of their cash income, but it will greatly decrease it.

The invisibly guarded nuke beacon: Drive to the enemy base in a stealth tank with a beacon (this works only if base defenses are down or preoccupied). Drive to someplace secluded and close to a building. Hop out of your stealth tank, deploy the beacon, and then get back in your tank and park over the beacon. Run over any engineer intent on disarming it.

Rule #10: Don't be timid
Too many games default into stalemates because one team is afraid to lose a tank in a base assault. Press your assault. Even if you lose one tank in the process of taking down the base defenses, you've opened up a whole new world of possibilities for your team to attack through.

GDI Tips

Mammoth tanks have both cannons and rockets. Use the cannons for buildings and vehicles. Use the rockets for infantry.

- Patch's tiberium flechette pistol may not look like much, but it packs a powerful punch against vehicles.
- Minigunner officers are excellent at helping detect enemy stealth tanks. Fire a spread of gunfire across the battlefield, and any stealth vehicles hit will usually glimmer a bit more brightly when struck.
- Make sure to support Sydney (with personal ion cannon) with a havoc or a minigunner, as the PIC has a long reload time and will need anti-infantry support.
- Support your armor with engineers. The mammoth tanks are massively powerful, but without engineer support, raveshaws and Black Hand lasers will rip right through it.

Nod Strategies

Stealth and speed are your main weapons. Vehicles are less armored, but they cost less.

- Three or four flame tanks are a powerful force to be reckoned with.
- A stealth trooper with a nuke beacon is a deadly thing.
- The chem trooper is in a totally enclosed suit, so don't be afraid to use tiberium fields to your advantage. No other infantry can walk through them.
- Keep moving; GDI's armor is strong, but it is also slow. If you stay out of range, you should be able to do massive damage to them from afar.

Medal of Honor Allied Assault

Marching orders for the two hardest levels By Thierrry Nguyen

Surviving Sniper Town By Mackey McCandlish, Level Designer

If you're getting pissed off at those dastardly snipers, then here's your salvation. On these pages are floorplans of the entire town, with each and every sniper marked out for you to scrutinize so you can take them out once you get into the mission itself. Study this floorplan well, and show those snipers what for.

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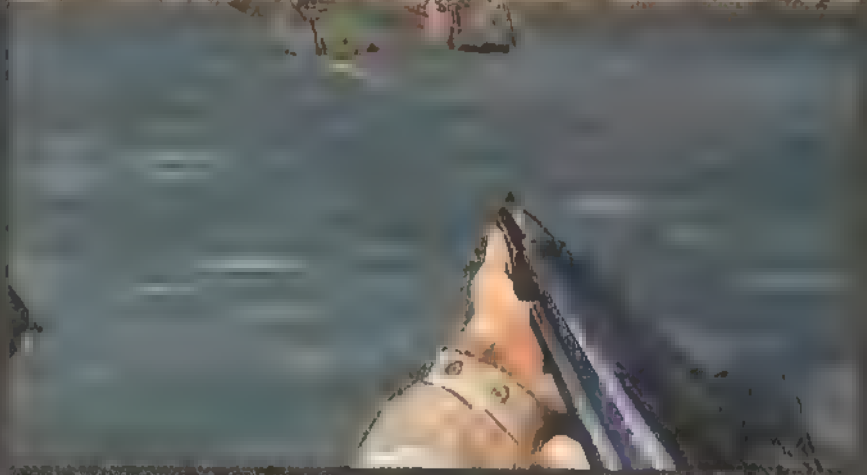
Overcoming Operation Overlord by Mackay McCammon

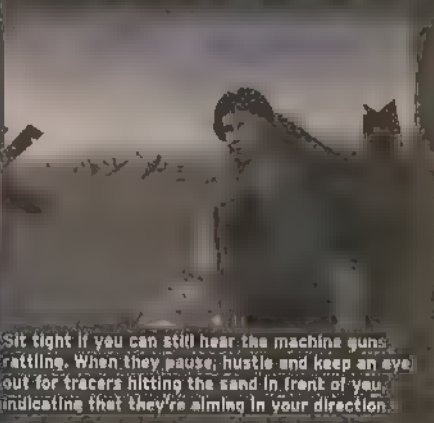
This short, intense segment of cinema-turned-gaming moment can be incredibly frustrating but all it takes is some patience, as seen here.



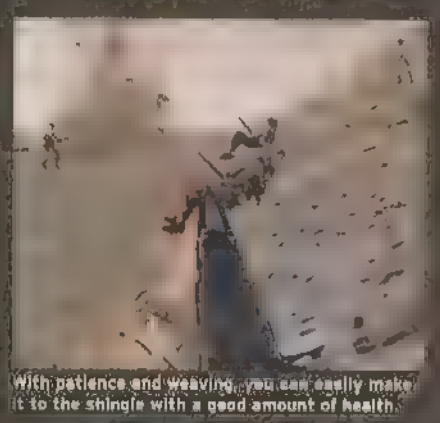
Jump out, hide behind one of the tiger traps, and veer toward the left, following the rest of the squad.

When you get to the beach, hit crouch, stay behind a tank trap, and wait for a pause in the machine gun fire. Then quickly stand and run.

Veer toward one of the two medics on the beach and crouch again. After you are healed, wait for the pause in machine gun fire. This is key.



Sit tight if you can still hear the machine guns rattling. When they pause, hustle and keep an eye out for tracers hitting the sand in front of you, indicating that they're aiming in your direction.



With patience and weaving, you can easily make it to the shingle with a good amount of health.

Sid Meier's SimGolf

Part II of our *SimGolf* guide shows the ropes on constructing and playing courses

By Rob Smolka

Continuing from last month's guide on running your resort, I'll now get into making the course itself and how to make great golf players to boot. Soon enough, you can show both Messieurs Meier and Wright who's boss when it comes to *SimGolfing*.

Shiny Baubles, Part II Always be thinking about the aesthetics of each hole and making sure the golfers have plenty of interesting things to look at. Placing scenic objects can be very expensive, so be sure you take full advantage of the terrain you're building on. Using existing rock formations, fountains, and the like can be just as effective at making golfers appreciate the beauty of your course as if you spent a fortune putting down your own paid-for scenery. **(Figure 1)**

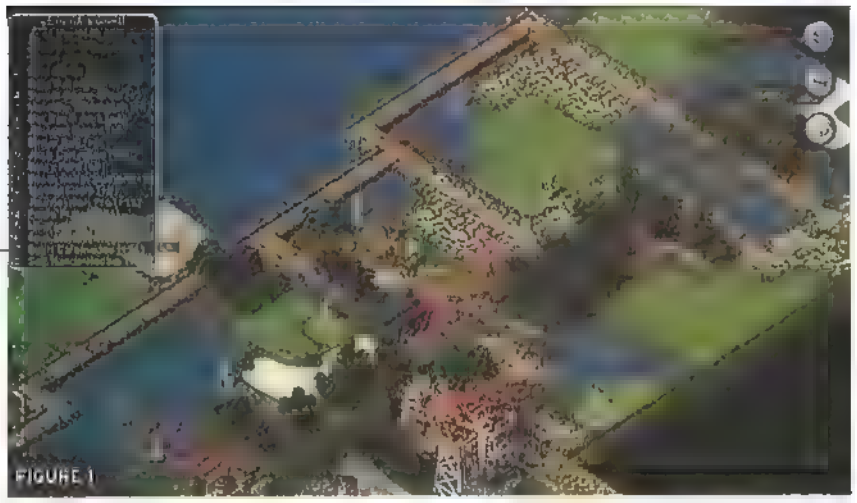


FIGURE 1

Fun for All A wide variety of golfers are going to play at your resort (if you're doing things correctly), and it's important that you make the course playable for all of them. A hole that a professional player might not think twice about could turn out to be unplayable for the average schmo who might otherwise have become a paying member of your resort. Make sure that if you require a difficult shot to clear a hazard (long shots over water or forcing the player to hit a draw or a fade to avoid a tree, for instance), you also have an option for poor golfers to bail out and complete the hole. **(Figure 2)**

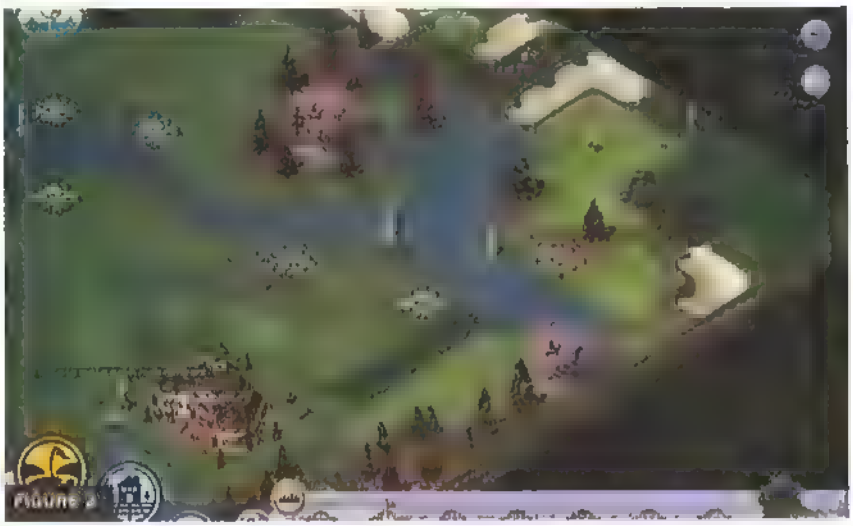


FIGURE 2

Optical Illusions Deceiving the golfers into thinking a hole plays harder than it really does is the number-one key to making great holes. Place some bunkers where they can be seen, but where even the most errant shot will have a tough time finding them. These bunkers don't really affect the difficulty of the hole, but you're giving golfers something to think about, and when they avoid the bunkers, they'll feel that much better about the game. The same rule applies to streams, lakes, and other hazards. Don't get carried away, though; remember that the first rule is making sure the course is pleasing to the eye. **(Figure 3)**

FIGURE 3

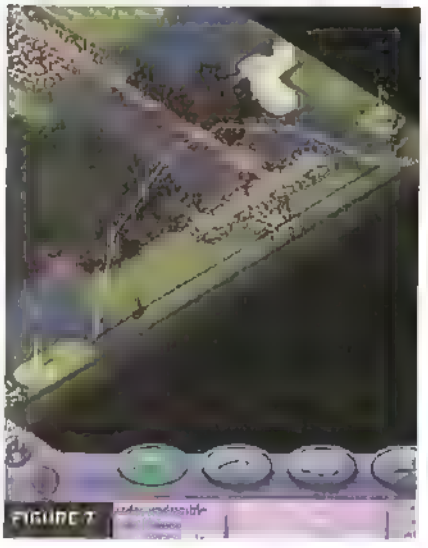
The Incentive Program Another sign of a great hole is that it rewards golfers' abilities. Professionals should be able to post a better score on a hole than your average Sunday morning player who shoots a round of 100. For instance, let's say a professional player hits the ball 280 yards off the tee. At around the 260-yard mark, you could place a hazard and make the fairway rather narrow. Before and after the hazard, the fairway could be a lot wider and more forgiving. In this way, the long hitters will

be able to clear the hazard (if all things go as planned), while shorter hitters can choose either to take their chances with the hazard or to lay up short, which is a challenge to their accuracy skill. The other skill that can be rewarded—in addition to length and accuracy—is imagination. An example of challenging a golfer's imagination could be a hole where a grove of trees sits in the middle of the fairway: The dull player will either attempt to hit over the trees or lay up short and then hit a short iron over them. The imaginative player will notice the hill running along the left side of the hole that can be used to play a bank shot past the trees. **(Figure 4)**

Difficulty Decisions Holes are given a par rating for a reason. If you notice any of your holes playing too easy or too difficult, you might want to make some changes. A safe range above or below par can be as high as .3 (so a par four can average anywhere from 3.7 strokes to 4.3 strokes without adversely affecting your course). Once you notice a hole's scoring average start to move past this range, it's time to make some changes. **(Figure 5)**

Honing Your Skills As they say in the real estate business, location, location, location. It's just as important in your golf game, so any time you have a chance to add some points to your professional golfer, use them to get your accuracy ratings up to at least 90 percent. Sure, it's nice to hit the ball far, but if you're always ending up in the hazards, your scores are going to suffer. **(Figure 6)**

Know the Situation It's fine to take chances when you're playing a practice round. In fact it's preferable, as you may go a long way toward increasing some of your golfer's abilities. In big money tournaments, though, it pays to play a more conservative game. It may look like you can clear that water hazard, but it can cost you thousands of dollars every time your ball ends up in the drink. **(Figure 7)**



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Greenspeak

Shuddup and Play

This month's rant has been postponed, due to good games **By Jeff Green**

As the editor-in-chief of this esteemed publication, I get lots of email, all day long. Most of it can be easily filed into a few distinct categories:

1. People who want to work here.

2. People who think our reviews suck and want to know which barn animal gave birth to us that could make us so stupid. And P.S., do we have any job openings?

3. Angry Canadians.

Between these letters and the offers to get me rich quick or enlarge my genitalia (as if that were possible), my inbox tends to get a little tedious. But this month I received a letter that really got me. It was from a reader who let me know in no uncertain terms that he was done reading our magazine, forever. Why?

"It's your constant whining about the coming end of computer gaming. It has become increasingly harder to read an article in your magazine without someone pointing out that PCs are almost dead. GIVE IT UP ALREADY!"

Even when we're happy, we whine. You want cheerful? Try Carrot Top.

Now, first of all, I should point out the obvious fact that whining is what we do here. Even when we're happy, we whine. You want cheerful? Try Carrot Top. But truthfully, this email, which went on for several paragraphs, was good for me. Because it's true. PC gaming is *not* dying. It's not dying now, and it won't be dying a year from now. So let me take off the Chicken Little outfit here and now. No, that was not my real beak.

***

The problem with those of us in the gaming business—other than the stench—is that we are very close to our subject. We talk to developers and publishers and other journalists all day long. Everyone speculates, everyone schemes, everyone watches everyone else. And for the past year, within the industry, it's been all about the consoles. There's just no denying it. With two major console systems released and the PlayStation 2 hosting a phenomenal wave of great games, the PC has just not been able to compete, hypewise.

And there were some problems. Games slipped, games sucked, games defected from the PC to the Xbox. "The center of gaming gravity has moved," said one Microsoft executive to me. This is why we whine. Because Microsoft thinks they can move the freaking gravity.

The good thing, however, is that it's not true. Yes, there was a slump, but boy did that slump end fast. Just this week alone, we got *Jedi Knight II*, *Freedom Force*, and *Dungeon Siege*—all awesome PC-only games. Coming soon: *Neverwinter Nights*, *WarCraft III*, *Age of Mythology*, *Unreal Tournament 2003*. And how about the game on this month's cover? You think you'll be playing that on your TV any time this millennium? Think again, Chuckles. Yes, I do see the port for an Internet connection on the Xbox, but come back to me when I can use it to play something. In the meantime, right here and now, millions of people are playing games over the Internet on their PCs. So I got your gravity right here buddy—swingin'.

***

Instead of writing off the PC, the smarter game publishers (like Microsoft, of course) realize there's a fortune to be made on consoles *and* PCs, simply by taking advantage of the strengths of each.

Should I state the obvious? It's simple: Sitting 1 foot away from a monitor at a desk with a keyboard and mouse is a fundamentally different aesthetic and sensory experience than sitting 6 feet away from a TV on the couch with a controller. The end. Both are great fun, but they are totally different. I can waste hours playing console games like *Soul Caliber* and, most recently, *Jet Set Future Radio* on my couch at home, but neither would have any appeal to me as a PC game. Their charms are inherently tied into the fact that I can play them casually, in my living room, with friends, while kicking back on my couch. Similarly, games like *Civ III* or *Heroes IV* demand that I sit up close, in full concentration, at a desk, so I can strategize and micromanage—they are solitary, abstract brain exercises that would be utterly boring (and hard to see) on my TV. And anyway, who has a TV at work?

PC gaming will die, at the earliest, only when everyone has HDTV and broadband and keyboards and mice attached to their TVs. In other words, sometime after we're all dead. So let's let the next generation mourn the death of PC gaming. Me, I'm gonna shut up about it and go play *Freedom Force* instead.

Send resumes, hate mail, and penile enlargement solutions to jeff_green @ziffdavis.com.

ILLUSTRATION BY MICHAEL SLACK

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WHEN IN ROME...

JULIUS CAESAR (100 – 44BC)

Used bribes, gladiator contests, and banquets to further his political leadership of Rome. Shattered the Helvetian invasion in a crushing defeat in 58BC. Quelled Gallic resistance, conquering Gaul and adding it to the Roman Empire in 50BC. Murdered in 44BC by a band of senatorial conspirators for political gains.

JULIUS OCTAVIUS AKA: 'AUGUSTUS' (63BC – AD14)

Marched on Rome and forced the senate to accept him as consul at the age of 20. Defeated Marc Antony in the battle of Atium and added Egypt to the Roman Empire in 30BC. Described as one of the most skilled and talented rulers of Rome.

HARVEY JONES AKA: "TACO_GRANDE" (AD1984-)

Amassed a huge army and conquered Southern Italy from his bedroom at 3:00AM. Signed a diplomatic treaty with the Volscians over a slice of pepperoni and a cola. Built Rome in a day not including bathroom breaks. Social life (what's left of it) put on hold until the conquest of Britain is complete

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Soldier of Fortune II: Double Helix image courtesy of Activision, Inc.

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